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The American University in Cairo

School of Global Affairs and Public Policy

**The role of NGOs in empowering visually impaired people to access education and
employment in Egypt**

A Thesis Submitted to

Public Policy and Administration Department

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Public Administration

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Abstract

Disability is viewed as a developmental issue given that people with disability are usually excluded from mainstream economic and social opportunities. However, the attention given to the people with disability in Egypt is mostly confined to medical and scientific features. Local NGOs in Egypt have long been working with visually impaired people. However, there is limited literature and empirical research specifying the role of local NGOs in empowering the visually impaired people to access education and employability in Egypt. Thus the purpose of this study is to assess the role that local NGOs play in this regard. The methodology used in the study is qualitative in nature and semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with five local Egyptian NGOs that have experienced and are already working in the field of visual impairment. The study revealed that local NGOs delivered a number of initiatives towards empowering the visually impaired through strategies that supports early intervention, providing rehabilitation services which is considered the first stop towards empowering the child with disability to access education. Strategies in terms of empowering the visually impaired to access the job market are rather limited to providing developmental training. Local NGOs do not play an adequate role in policy making. As such, the medical model of disability continues to dominate disability legislation and policy in Egypt. Thus, it is recommended that local NGOs should be moving from the medical/welfare model to a social/human rights-based model.

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Chapter 1

"Disability need not be an obstacle to success. I have had motor neuron disease for practically all my adult life. Yet it has not prevented me from having a prominent career in astrophysics and a happy family life" - Professor Stephen Hawking (WHO, 2011, p.9)

1. Introduction

In 1976, Stephen Hawking, a renowned professor at the Department of Applied Mathematics and Theoretical Physics at University of Cambridge, demonstrated that black holes release radiation as a result of quantum effects. Afterwards, this discovery was called the 'Hawking radiation'. Hawking made his discovery while he was fully paralyzed due to a nervous system defect. He could only connect via an electronic speech-generating device. But if Hawking was in Egypt, his admission to university education might have been totally blocked (Shams Eldin, 2014).

In Egypt, there is no precise consensus on the number of people with disability (UN, 2007). The 2006 Egyptian census estimated that there is around 1.8 per cent of the Egyptian population are living with disabilities with around 475,576 persons with disabilities in Egypt (Egyptian Government, 2009). The UN estimates a higher number, about 12 million people are living with some kind of disability (WHO, 2011). It is affirmed that one of the main reasons behind existence of disabilities in Egypt is intermarriage between relatives which acts as the main cause behind the recurring inheritance and genetic causes. The problem is that parents may not display any signs or visual disabilities; but their children could (Salah, 2012).

Among the 12 million disabled in Egypt, the visually impaired population is estimated to be at least 800,000 in Egypt (Rashed, 2008). However, there is controversy about the accuracy of the numbers, as Rashed (2008) discussed in an article published in the Al-Ahram weekly newspaper. He affirms that Egyptians usually do not disclose information about their disabled family member to census officials. This is largely due to existing traditions and customs which drive some families not to confess cases of disability, especially if the person with disability is a female. El Deeb (2005) also explained that another reason is the fact that the questionnaire of the general population census does not include types of disability, which, if included, would affect the number of the persons with disability.

In Egypt, the situation of the visually impaired is far behind so many countries in the world. As highlighted by Salah (2012), most of these visually impaired in Egypt do suffer from lack of accessibilities like inaccessible sidewalks, public transportation without ramps, utilities are not accessible for people with physical disabilities, ineffective educational techniques as well as governmental negligence. We can further describe that prior to the 1970s, people with disabilities including visual impairment in Egypt, and in the Arab world in general, were quite marginalized and stigmatized by their own societies or communities. Adding to this, there were no educational or awareness programs provided to people to raise their awareness concerning disabilities. Thus, people with disabilities were seen as freaks of nature and were totally excluded from the society (Lababidi and El Arabi, 2002). Yet, until recently, disability still remains to be culturally stigmatized in Egypt. Rather than encouraging people with disabilities to become active members of their society, cultural customs have often pushed families to hiding their disabled members and caring for them at home (El Shami, 2012).

A dominant problem in the disability field is the lack of access to education for both children and adults with disabilities (Lindqvist, 1999). This is no different in Egypt. A key challenge that the visually impaired people face in Egypt is access to education.

Hence, the purpose of this chapter is four fold. Firstly, to introduce some important background information about the status of both education and employment in relation to disability in Egypt. Secondly, to present historical background about disability policy in Egypt in order to identify policy strengths or gaps. Thirdly, this chapter sheds light on the Arab Spring and disability protests in Egypt. Fourthly, it provides an overview on disability in Arab countries including institutional and legal frameworks. And since disability is an important development issue, so this chapter finally presents background information about disability in the developing world.

1.1 Disability and Education in Egypt

As a matter of basic and essential human rights, people with disabilities should not be excluded or isolated from the society at large and institutions or segregated on the basis of their disability. It is argued that inclusion is not only an educational or a professional issue, but rather an issue of a basic human rights (Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education, 1997). In 1948, The Universal Declaration of Human Rights has affirmed that "Everyone has the right to education" (UN, 1948, p.7). In Egypt, according to the 1971 constitution, education is a right that fulfils the

two fundamental principles of equal opportunities and equity. Articles 18, 20 and 21 declare that education is a basic right which the state is responsible for making sure it guarantees equity. The constitutional provisions also state that basic education is compulsory and is free in the organizations of the state in all its different levels (Ghoneim, 2014). Additionally, according to 2014 constitution, article 19 guarantees the right to education as well as article 81 which declares the right to education of people with disabilities (Egyptian Government, 2013)

However, there are a number of barriers for people with disabilities within the Egyptian educational system which can even block their access to education. These barriers include shortage in the number of schools required to meet the needs of visually impaired children in rural and remote areas and slums (Ghoneim, 2014). In many times, there is inadequate special education or integrated education. Although this may also be the same case for children without disabilities but the disparity is significantly huge. For example, the ratio is 1 school per 454 non-disabled children as opposed to 1 specialized school per 44,850 children with disabilities (Mahmoud, 2012). In many cases, inaccessible transportation in Egypt or unfriendly building structures can prevent children with disability including visually impaired students from getting to schools or universities, (Gann, 2012). Moreover, there is a lack of developing systems and legislation that should support the implementation of the policies of care for people with disabilities, lack of parents' and civil society institutions awareness about the importance of inclusive education, the child with disability does not get enough attention by the public education teacher nor does he/she get adequate services in the context of this type of education (Ghoneim, 2014). Adding to this, the effects of marginalization have also extended to both public and private schools, where the admissions criteria do often cause children with disabilities to be eliminated. In governmental specialized schools that are established for children with disabilities, the education provided is weak and only few families are able to pay for the extra expenses for private schools and teaching aids (El Shami, 2012).

El Shami (2012) further highlighted that despite constitutional guarantees to the right to education, students with disabilities including the visually impaired still strive with discriminatory laws that are limiting their opportunities even for higher university education.

Shams Eldin (2014) explains that one of the main challenges facing the students with disability is that the Egyptian Ministry of Higher Education issued a decree specifying the exact faculties that those with disabilities can join, stating that some of the technical faculties (like engineering)

require and need special skills that the Egyptian Supreme Council of Universities know for sure that students with disabilities cannot handle, assuming that students with disabilities will not succeed if the Ministry of Higher Education admits them to join technical faculties.

Hence, in Egypt, students with disabilities are not admitted into technical schools which conflicts the constitution and international treaties signed by Egypt that requires the Egyptian government to give equal opportunities for education to those with disabilities (Shams Eldin, 2014).

1.2 Disability and Employment in Egypt

People with disabilities are considered to be among the most helpless group when it comes to access to decent work and employability skills (ILO, 2014). El Shami (2012) highlighted that legally, the government policy for employing disabled Egyptians is based on a quota system equal to five per cent for companies with more than fifty employees. However, this law is not correctly put into effect as this quota is not enforced, and companies often have disabled persons on their payroll to meet the quota without actually employing these individuals.

According to the ILO (2014), in addition to lack of access to education and training, people with disabilities in Egypt do suffer from a lack of social and community awareness leading to feelings of exclusion from the Egyptian community including their workplace. Other barriers include the employers' negative perceptions towards disability in general and people with disability in specific. Employers may not be knowledgeable of the needed job adjustments like environmental adaptations or assistive technology which assists a person with disability or visually impaired people to perform effectively at the work place.

1.3 Historical Background of the Disability Policies in Egypt

Egypt is considered to be one of the first countries in the Middle East to tackle supporting the needs of its people with disabilities. In Egypt, laws concerning the people with disabilities can be tracked to the mid twentieth century with the first legislation formalized in 1950. The law followed the International Human Rights Declaration announced in 1948 to which Egypt was a signatory (Abdel Sadek, 2008). However, the 1950 Law no. 116 tackled the people with disabilities only within the framework of their entitlement to some forms of social insurances and pensions (Shukr Allah et al., 2007).

However, following the 1952 revolution, greater emphasis was placed on disability issues when the government issued several legislative measures intended to secure care and security for people with disabilities. Among these legislative measures were the labor Law 91 in 1959, Social Welfare Law 133 in 1964 and the Health Insurance Law in 1964 (Ministry of Insurance and Social Affairs, 1987). Yet, Hagrass (2005) identifies a number of aspects that need to be considered when evaluating the impact of these laws on Egyptian society. For example, the Ministry of Social Affairs is the only governmental department responsible for issuing and implementing both the Labor as well as the Rehabilitation Laws. Thus, only one government entity is responsible for both rehabilitation, training and employment. Despite that this could demonstrate an advantage in terms of easier internal communication within the one ministry staff concerned with various elements of policy implementation; yet this could also reveal potential communication difficulties or challenges with the other relevant ministries (Hagrass, 2005).

Additionally, the Labor Law of 1959 is considered to be the first law to introduce a quota system in Egypt as it introduced a two per cent quota scheme for employers to guarantee the employment of workers with disabilities to their workforce (Hagrass, 2005).

In 1975, the basic legislation which regulated the rights of the persons with disability was the law 39 which was concerning the rehabilitation of the disabled. This law includes 21 articles which deals with the following themes: definition of disabled and rehabilitation services; information related to the creation of a higher council of rehabilitation, detailed explanations of rights to receive health, and support services; right to work and job opportunities (Abdel Sadek, 2008).

The 1975 Law was later amended under Law 49 in 1982. The new law increased the employment quota for disabled workers, from two to five per cent in addition to introducing an exemption from duty taxes for the cars that people with disabilities could use. This law allows people with disabilities to import cars amended to fit their needs without having to pay duty taxes (Abdou, 2014).

However, Hagrass (2005) views that despite the fact that the quota system ensures that there are some job opportunities for disabled workers, its application in real life practice is restrictive in the sense that it alienates the disabled workers from non-disabled colleagues, reduces their ability to compete in the open job market and, accordingly, does not promote equal opportunities in the workplace.

Job opportunities available for workers with disabilities still remains limited to public services and governmental jobs and excludes private (Zidan, 2012).

According to the new Egyptian constitution in 2014, article 81 guarantees the right to education of people with disabilities as well as their right to exercise political rights. Article 244 grants people with disability appropriate representation in the first parliament to be elected after this constitution is adopted, in the manner specified by law (Egyptian Government, 2014). However, laws will never fully address the issues of disability in Egypt unless they are accompanied by deeper systemic changes in sectors such as education, transportation, and healthcare as well as specifying practical mechanisms for the enforcement of those laws. Governments need to cultivate awareness of and proactive responses to such barriers if they are to truly serve their people. Moreover, to ensure that persons with disabilities can effectively and fully participate in political and public life on an equal basis with other including the right and opportunity for persons with disabilities to vote and be elected, there is a need to ensure that voting procedures, facilities and materials are appropriate and accessible by facilitating the use of assistive devices and new technologies where appropriate (Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights, 2014). Additionally, according to the new constitution, once disabled people are represented in one parliamentary cycle, they cannot run for another one, unless they succeed in pushing the parliament to issue a new law that guarantees people with disabilities a quota in other parliamentary cycles (Fouad, 2015).

1.4 The Arab Spring and Disability Protests in Egypt

When researching disability in Egypt, we cannot ignore discussing the protests that took place aftermath of the 25th of January revolution in Egypt. In Egypt, One of the first disability protests took place on June 17, 2011, which occurred during the pro-democracy protests. The protest that went on for two days mainly demanded the Egyptian government to protect and preserve the disabled rights through supporting them to get employment opportunities in ministries and private sector emphasizing their right to obtain a job, their need for useful training programs and demanding the implementation of the law which mandated that five per cent of jobs be given to people with disabilities (The Egyptian Gazette, 2011). Another protest which attracted the media attention, started late October in 2011 which included a sit-in in front of the Egyptian Parliament asking for an increase in the quotas for hiring disabled people into government service from five to ten per cent, the provision of job opportunities through government schemes as well

as the provisions of a decent transportation system that can accommodate people with disabilities (Ismail, 2011).

On November 2011, the disabled protesters held up signs which included slogans like “The Revolution of the Disabled” in order to protest and draw the government’s attention to their suffering. The protests also asked for more decent job opportunities, rights for an accessible transportation and free housing. Late in 2011, the disability protests were brought into line with the remarkably pro-democracy frame when they asked for accessible voting places (Barnartt, 2014).

Eventually, Kamal El-Ganzouri, the prime minister at that time, established the National Council for Disability Affairs (NCDA) which calls for the implementation and application of the international conventions protecting the rights of people with disability referring to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities that Egypt signed in April 2007. Additionally, the NCDA can propose laws to the Egyptian government (Salah, 2012).

1.5 Disability in Arab countries - Institutional and Legal Frameworks

Measuring disability occurrence is a difficult challenge globally but mainly in developing countries. Social stigma is one of the major factors which hinder people from reporting disabilities which explain the surprisingly low disability prevalence in the Arab countries. It is a fact that, there are neither up-to-date statistics nor reliable data on disability across the Middle East region. Existing data are based on forecasts, such as using the WHO and World Bank average prevalence rates. Therefore, an exact number of the people with disabilities in the Arab region is not available (SIDA, 2014). Accordingly, based upon WHO (2012) international calculations, the estimates of disability prevalence rate in Arab countries is at 15 per cent of the total population with over 53 million Arab are with disabilities.

The majority of people with disabilities in Arab countries suffer from lack of access to education services (Hadidi and Al Khateeb, 2015). It is also estimated that 95 per cent of children with disabilities in the region are excluded from school at the primary level (Peters, 2009). Hadidi (1998) explains that services for people with disabilities and special education programs were based on charity work and compassion which clarifies why the Ministry of Social Development

rather than the Ministry of Education have presumed responsibility for special education services for years in most Arab countries.

However, some of the gulf countries have better social welfare services. For example, Saudi Arabia provides people with disability through the use of social welfare a means to allow them to adapt to society social life and to the environment. In accordance with principles of Universal Design, Saudi Arabia enforced Access for All Regulations of Architecture and Transportation Facilities which allowed people with disabilities easy access to different areas in the community (Abdou, 2014). The UAE undertook a wide range of medical, technological, infrastructure advances as well as accessibility to recreational and leisure facilities (Eno, 2000). In Oman, The Ministry of Health established a blindness screening and prevention that has significantly reduced the number of children with vision impairment (Krefting, 1993).

Egypt and the Arab world share some of the challenges with regards to disability. For example, one major challenge to the progress of special education in Arab countries is the absence of precise statistics and reliable data on disabilities, which led to difficulties in making policy and setting priorities. Still in Arab countries, disability registry data are insufficient, and data maintenance are still very common (Weber, 2012). Moreover, Egypt as well as the Arab world faces the same challenge that adults with disabilities have less access to employment opportunities than others without disabilities (ESCWA, 2014). Also, literacy among women with disabilities was far lower than that of men with disabilities. On the other hand, the percentage of women with disabilities who completed higher education was only one-third the rate of men with disabilities (Nagata, 2003). Accordingly, the labour force participation of Arab women with disabilities is still very narrow (Nagata, 2003).

The causes of disability in the Middle East region are different, diverse and sometimes country-specific. Causes include inadequate access to health services, malnutrition, road accidents, injuries resulting directly from warfare and landmines. Hakim and Jaganjac (2005) states that many of the disability in Middle East region stems from preventable impairments, and could be lessened through treatment, or through rehabilitation and other forms of care. According to Hadidi and Al Khateeb (2015), the Arab Spring that happened in the Arab region since early 2011 has added to the huge increase in disabilities in those countries.

According to ESCWA (2014), developments have taken place over recent years with regards to

the legal and institutional frameworks on disability in Arab countries. The status of the signature and ratification of the Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is considered high in the Arab region. Most of the countries in the Arab region have created national coordination apparatus on disability, mostly in the form of national disability councils. On the national legal frameworks, most of the Arab states have incorporated articles on disability in their constitutions (ESCWA, 2014).

However, despite that many Arab countries currently have laws and policies which encourage the implementation of actions and measures to protect the rights of people with disabilities such as the right to receive appropriate education, to be integrated into community life and to be rehabilitated and employed yet in some countries legislation and procedures are usually not enforced. Hadidi and Al Khateeb (2015) stress that the main challenges relating to disability in some Arab countries are discrepancies between political commitments as well as the absence or weakness of corresponding action plans; the ineffective coordination mechanisms within and between sectors and the fragmentation of existing efforts.

1.6 Disability and the Developing World

More than one billion people in the world live with some form of disability (WHO, 2011). About 70 per cent of the people with disability are in the developing world (GIZ, 2006). Despite these numbers, yet disability has occupied a very minor role to date in development policy and research circles of many developing countries (Mizunoya and Mitra, 2013). It is estimated that 20 per cent of the world's poorest people are disabled which means that people with disabilities constitute one of the largest single groups of excluded and chronically poor people in the developing world (DfID, 2007).

In the developing countries, the connections between disability and poverty are highly complex. Disabled people and their families are frequently drawn towards poverty as they are excluded from mainstream economic, social, and political opportunities throughout their lives in addition to the huge financial costs they face related to their impairments (Yeo and Moore, 2003). People with disabilities in developing countries often lack proper schooling and/or denied education. Accordingly, they are then unable to find paid employment, thus driving them more deeply into poverty. Breaking out of the vicious cycle of poverty and disability becomes more and more difficult. Additionally, they lack social protection and are usually excluded from social processes,

which increases their risk of falling into poverty. The majority of people with disabilities in developing countries live in poverty and deprivation (DfID, 2000). Figure 1 illustrates the vicious cycle of poverty and disability:



Figure 1: Poverty and disability – a vicious cycle

Source: DFID, 2000, p.4

The outcome of the cycle of poverty and disability is that people with disabilities are commonly amongst the poorest of the poor and their literacy rates are significantly lower than the rest of the population (DfID, 2000). Women are particularly disadvantaged in many circumstances facing multiple disadvantages such as exclusion and discrimination based on gender as well as disability on another hand (GIZ, 2006). Moreover, political situations in many developing countries hugely affected the conditions of people with disability in society. Political wars and unrest have hugely added to the number of people with impairments who are often among the most vulnerable of all (ESCWA, 2014).

Unfortunately, in developing countries, the low profile of disability can be attributed to a failure to perceive disability as a major development issue. It is argued that, in addition to the lack of resources in many developing countries, the political debate remains undeveloped with little account being taken to guarantee that the needs of minority groups have equal footing in public debate (Pfeiffer, 2001).

Disability does not only have an effect on the individual, but also influences the whole community. The cost of excluding people with disabilities from being an active part in community

is high. This exclusion often results in losses in human potential and productivity. The UN estimates that 25 per cent of the entire population is negatively affected in one way or another as a result of disabilities. The cost of disability has three constituents; a direct cost which is treatment; the indirect costs to those who are not directly affected i.e. carers ; and the opportunity costs of income foregone from incapacity (DfID, 2000).

Accordingly, it is so important to view disability as a major development issue that needs more support and efforts. To support and help the disability and the people with disability, not-for-profits and community based organizations can play an important role by serving the needs of the disabled. Especially, in Global South countries - where social security nets are almost non-existent, NGOs fill up a critical vacuum through service delivery. But at the same time, sustainable and extensive change can accordingly be brought about only through creating effective policies and through making sure that disability is truly a cross-cutting issue (Abidi and Sharma, 2014).

1.7 Statement of the Problem

Although WHO (2011) estimated around 12 million of people in Egypt live with disabilities, the care given to them is mostly limited to medical and scientific features. Other aspects such as the educational, social, employability issues including legislative as well as political aspects have received inadequate attention. Many believe that people with disability in Egypt are marginalized, weakened, deprived, impoverished and are considered not part of the Egyptian developmental priorities (El Messiri and Mabrouk, 2005).

The Egyptian governments all over the years dealt with the problem but with successive shortcomings and negligence that made the lives of the visually impaired become hard (Ahmed, 2012). There is an inclination for policy makers generally to ignore disability issues; they are looked at as a rehabilitation issue and someone else's problem (Hagrass, 2005).

In Egypt, current services given and offered covers only about 10 per cent of the total number of persons with disabilities (JICA, 2002). Moreover, some of the shortcomings of the previous governments were un-inclusive education, lack of awareness programs and ineffective laws that were described to be encouraging discrimination (Ahmed, 2012).

Despite the fact that many NGOs have been working with the visually impaired people in Egypt aiming at improving the conditions of the people with visual disability yet, there are many questions regarding the role of NGOs in empowering people with disability - with special focus on the visually impaired- and if these NGOs are actually doing enough and are effective or need to exert more efforts. For example, aftermath of the 25th of January Revolution; many protests that took place in Egypt in 2011 were the pro-democracy protests and many were related to disability issues and were carried out by the people with disability. Thus, it is important to recognize that disability is a major problem in Egypt, a likely shared by other developing countries (Barnartt, 2014).

Many NGOs who have been working in Egypt for the past decades with people with disabilities, including visually impaired, yet to date, there is no credible evaluation on the effectiveness of their efforts in Egypt to ascertain whether or not they are achieving their goals. As such, the question that this study addresses is what role NGOs in Egypt play in education, social inclusion and empowerment for the visually impaired as well as participating in the policy change and how do we assess their role so far. The objective of this study is to develop an understanding of the role that local NGOs in Egypt play to empower the visually impaired in Egypt and on policy making.

Although disability is a major problem in Egypt, it is perceived not as a major developmental problem. Therefore there is limited evidence based empirical research conducted on the role of local NGOs in empowering the visually impaired to access education and employment in Egypt. There is also vagueness as to how local NGOs are advocating for policy making efforts in relation to disability.

1.8 Research Questions

The questions for this study were structured in a way aiming to answer two sets of analyses and investigations; the first set is about exploring and examining the role of NGOs in providing services and support for people with disability with special focus on visually impaired and if their effort is effective and sufficient. In particular, this set aims to answer the following questions:

- 1- What are the issues of disability (with special focus to the visually impaired) in Egypt?
- 2- What is the role of NGOs in empowering the visually impaired to access education and employment?

- 3- Have local NGOs played a positive role in empowering visually impaired in Egypt?
- 4- What are the challenges that local NGOs working with disability face in Egypt?
- 5- To what extent local NGOs have been effective in empowering visually impaired people to overcome the barriers that are facing them to access to education and job market in Egypt?

The other set of questions are structured to review the policies related to Egypt's disability policies and if local NGOs had a role in promoting participation, helping people with disability to be heard by policy planners and politicians? In particular, this set aims to answer the following questions:

- 6- What is the Disability Policy in Egypt?
- 7- Have NGOs played any role in making disability policy in Egypt?

1.9 Research outline

This study is divided into six chapters. The first chapter is the introduction which gives the fundamental orientation about disability in Egypt as well as the Arab and the developing world. The second chapter presents the conceptual framework developed for this study which first identifies the different definitions of disability as well as presenting the different theoretical models of disability. The third chapter is the literature review which is covering literature around societal attitudes and the discourse surrounding the employment of people with disability and education highlighting the correlation of disability, societal attitudes, employment and education as well as NGOs and disability. Chapter four describes the research methodology including ethical consideration. Chapter five presents analysis of the collected data. Finally Chapter six concludes the main points from the analysis and gives the recommendations.

Chapter 2

2. Conceptual Framework

The focus of disability theory is presently split between a group who insist it exhibits a physical reality which affects the quality of life and those who view disability to be defined by social prejudice. Many comparative studies tackled and offered evidence of how the cultural variances affect a person's perception of disability (Groce and Zola, 1993). Disability has been subject to many definitions in different fields and for different purposes. The definitions of disability have been developed and used in different contexts (Altman, 2001). Varying the theoretical definition of disability eventually leads to having far reaching economic, social, and political implications. Laws and administrative programs use definitions that define program legislation and eligibility and coverage. Those definitions, which affect the lives of persons with disabilities, are usually grounded on theoretical models (Altman and Barnartt, 2000). As noted by Pfeiffer (2001), many scholars recognize that no single model can totally explain disability. Furthermore, each disability model may bring a useful perspective on disability in a given context.

Thus the importance of definition of disability is of interest to activists, governments, international organizations, disability policymakers, researchers and analysts because it has basic implications for the eligibility for public programs, for the range of legislation and the way programs and disability prevalence are measured.

The conceptual framework developed for this study will first identify the different definitions of disability as well as defining disability in Egypt. Secondly, it will present the different theoretical models of disability and their characteristics. Thirdly, I also aim to reflect on participation, empowerment and social transformation with particular reference to disabled people. These will all be used to analyze and evaluate the role of local NGOs in empowering the visually impaired in Egypt.

2.1 Disability Definitions and Models

The definition of disability is greatly controversial. Surprisingly, the literature does not contain an agreed-upon definition for disability. For example, in North America, the term is defined in a very specific description while in Africa, this term is defined in a general and broader

way (Zidan, 2012). Consequently, there is no one common definition to define disability or to measure it. According to Altman (2001) disability had been exposed to many definitions in different disciplines and for different purposes.

Most of the academic inputs have included definitions of disability from the international organizations such as the ILO and the WHO (Hagrass, 2005). According to the WHO, there are two shared characteristics that exists in most formal definitions of disability, the first is that disability is a mental or physical trait regarded or perceived as a dysfunction or impairment while the second is a personal or social constraint combined with that impairment (WHO, 1980). So according to this universal classification of disability, ‘impairment’ is described as a biological health condition, ‘disability’ is described as the functional limitations of their impairment while ‘handicap’ is the social outcomes of acquiring a disabling impairment. This explanation is linked with the individual model (Griffiths, 2010).

On the other hand, the definition of disability under the Equality Act 2010 is, "a person is disabled if he/she has a physical or mental impairment that has a long-term and extensive negative effect on the capability to perform usual daily activities" (The Equality Act, 2010, p.4).

Definitions of disability have been used and developed in different frameworks. Different models have been shaped to define disability (Mitra, 2006). Related definitions of disability includes: first the ‘individualistic medical’ definition of disability, the second is the liberal ‘inter-relational’, and the third is the ‘radical socio/political’ interpretation usually described as the ‘social model of disability’ (Barnes, 2000).

2.1.1 The Individual Medical Model

According to Mitra (2006), the individual medical model regards disability as a problem of the individual which is caused by an injury or a disease, or other health disorder and which necessitates a medical rehabilitation and treatment. Hence, places the problem of disabling obstacles and issues within the individual, and the functional boundaries to occur from being labeled as a disabled person. It is linked with a belief that disability is a personal tragedy (Oliver, 1990).

“If a person has a permanent impairment which results in using a wheelchair to move around, that person will never get ‘well’ ” – (Pfeiffer, 2001, p.31)

This model is described as being strongly normative because individuals are considered disabled on the foundation of being not able to operate as a “normal” person. Obviously, this typology is based on concepts of physical and intellectual normality, and that disability or handicap are produced by physiological or psychological abnormality or impairment (Barnes, 2003).

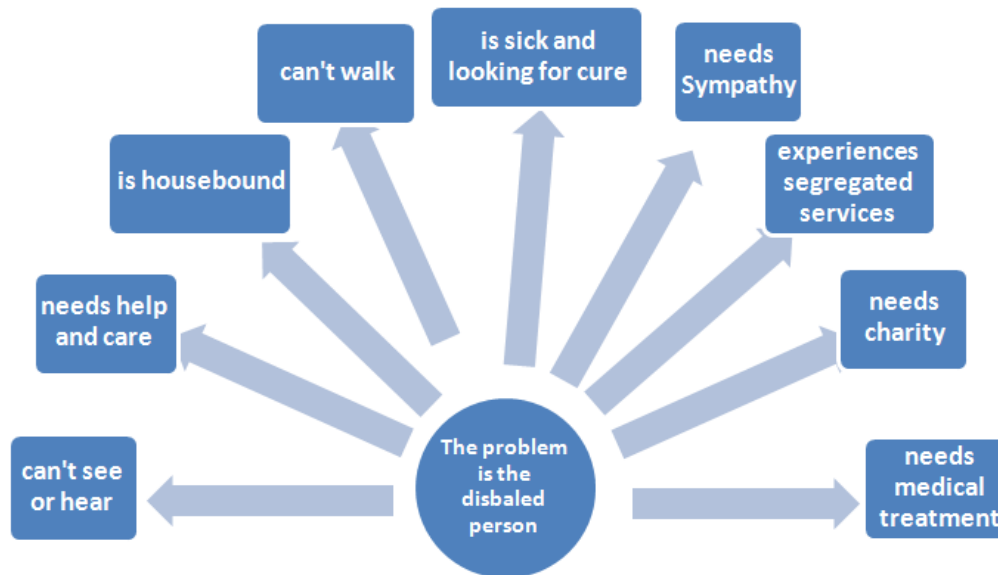


Figure 2: The characteristics of individual medical model of disability.

Source: Developed by the researcher

The characteristics of the traditional individualistic medical model of disability includes viewing that the health of a disabled person is the main reason for disadvantage and discrimination, that the disabled people is regarded as dependent upon medical professionals and carers, as abnormal person who needs sympathy or charity, who needs medical and rehabilitation services, and often the separation and exclusion of the individual in an institution for their own ‘protection’ as the only ways by which disabling obstacles can be overcome (Oliver, 1991). Within the individual medical model, rehabilitation has an essential role to perform in bringing the person back to the norm. The main interest of the medical model at the political level is to offer medical-care and rehabilitation services (Mitra, 2006). Thus, the disabled people are viewed as passive receivers of services aimed at cure or treatment.

There is a strong and positive relationship between the individual medical model and negative societal attitudes and discrimination which eventually lead to the exclusion of the person with disability to access education and employment as well as political and legal processes. Some of the characteristics of the individual medical model will be used later in the study to analyze and evaluate the role of NGOs in empowering the visually impaired in Egypt.

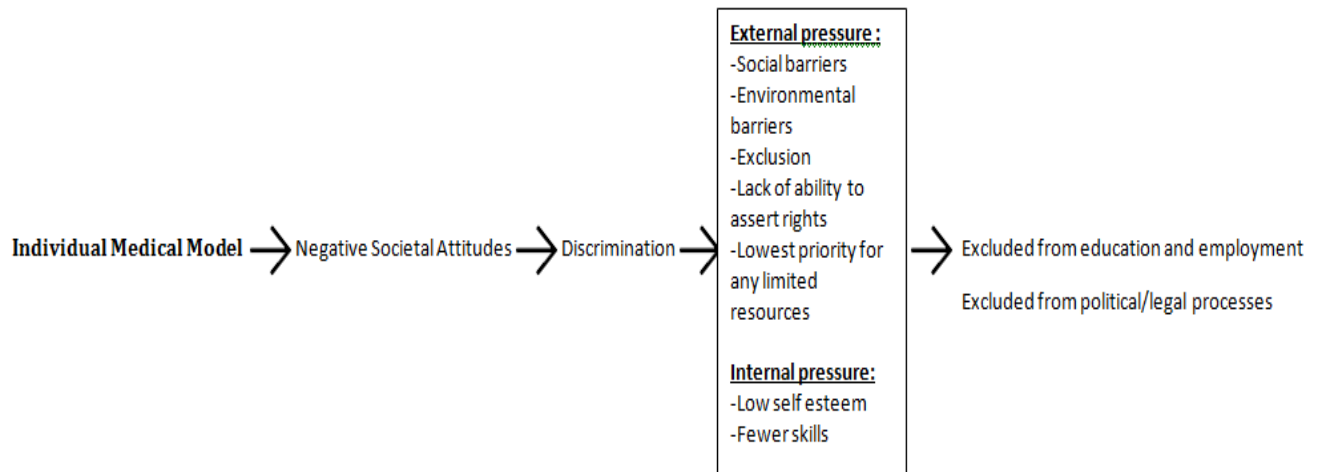


Figure 3: Individual medical model of disability relationship model

Source: Developed by the researcher

The second more liberal ‘inter-relational’ account is an effort to combine the traditional individualistic medical model of disability and the more radical socio-political interpretation (Barnes, 2003).

2.1.2 The Social Model of Disability

This re-interpretation of disability helped and assisted the formation of a ‘social model’ (Oliver, 1983). In 1983, Mike Oliver first coined the phrase to reveal the rising demand by disabled people and their supporters for:

"Nothing more fundamental than a switch away from focusing on the physical limitations of particular individuals to the way the physical and social environments impose limitations on certain groups or categories of people" (Oliver, 1983, p.23)

However, since the 1970s both the disabled activists and their organizations have discarded the individualistic medical approach to disability, instead, they have debated that while impairment is

an individual biological occurrence, disability, or the inability to do things, is the result of an inhospitable cultural and physical environment which stops and impedes people with impairments from taking part in their societies on an equal level with non-disabled colleagues (Barnes, 2000). This perception or viewpoint is today referred to as the ‘Social Model of Disability’ (Oliver, 1990). As Carson (2009) explains, the social model originates from the notion of focusing on breaking the attitudinal, environmental, social and organizational obstacles which eliminates any person with a disability.



Figure 4: The characteristics of the social model of disability.

Source: Developed by the researcher

Thus, the Social Model regards the disability as a social construct. Disability is not the trait of the individual; on the contrary, it is generated by the social environment and necessitates social change (Mitra, 2006). Thus this approach focuses on the different obstacles: cultural, economic, and political, encountered by people with impairments. Therefore, 'disability' is not a result of individual weaknesses but rather is socially created. The characteristics of the social model of disability includes focusing on removing social and environmental barriers, promoting change in attitudes and perceptions, promoting full participation and empowerment, removing discrimination and developing inclusive services. According to Holmes (2007), the social model could be comprehended as an ‘oppositional device’. The below diagram illustrates the relationship between the social model of disability and societal attitudes in the sense that the social model

promotes change in attitudes and perceptions thus leading to participation and inclusion and eventually to access to education and employment opportunities.

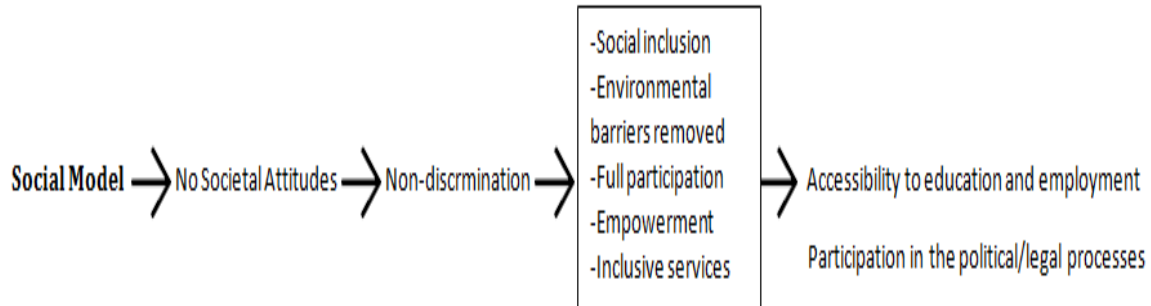


Figure 5: Social model of disability relationship model

Source: Developed by the researcher

This progress had an increasingly significant effect on social policy on both the international and national levels (Barnes, 2000). Moreover, over recent years this socio-political explanation of disablement has had a significant effect on the organizations of people with disabilities across the world as it has given them an effective instrument and tool with which they can draw the attention of decision and policy makers to the limits and drawbacks of the traditional medically inspired thinking on disability. Their purpose is to urge the politicians and policy makers to create new policies so as to provide the people with disability the same opportunities and rights as other people (Hagrass, 2005). For example, many countries including United Kingdom, have got now many forms of anti-discrimination legislations in order to safeguard and protect people with impairments from any unequal behavior or discrimination (Doyle, 1995). Moreover, the WHO reviewed the definition of disablement, generally recognized as ICIDH2, and has tried to integrate numerous important elements of the social model analysis of disability (Finkelstein, 1998). The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) recognizes that disability is a ‘developing’ concept and emphasizes that disability is caused and is a result from the interaction between persons with impairments and environmental and attitudinal obstacles that obstruct their effective and complete participation in society on an equal basis with others.

Furthermore, disability is progressively recognized as a human rights issue. Disability rights communities and social modelists claim that social change not only will it be more useful in

lessening the hindrances of impairment, nevertheless it is also prerequisite by justice in order to treat persons with disabilities fairly (Silvers, 1998). Disabled People's Organizations and disabled people have been the principal supporters for this change. Together they have established and created powerful lobby alliances demanding for specific legal instruments and tools to protect the fundamental human rights of the people with disability. This movement has concluded in a process which led to the creation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the formulation of systems to support and monitor its implementation (UN, 2007).



Figure 6: The medical model versus social model of disability

Source: Järvinen, 2012, p.10

The above diagram illustrates a comparison between both the medical and social model of disability. The disability models offer a means through which the issue of disability can be explained and understood in terms of wider socio-economic conditions and relations (Barton, 2003). They provide a framework through which disabled people can describe their experiences and where discrimination, exclusion and inequality can be named and challenged. Some of the characteristics of both the individual medical model and the social model will be used in this study to analyze and evaluate the role of NGOs in empowering the visually impaired people in Egypt. Positive changes in the situation of people with disabilities are dependent on the procedures of their governments and support from NGOs (Dfid, 2000)

2.2 Defining Disability in Egypt

The Egyptian Ministry of Social Affairs uses the term “ ‘ disabled person’ ” for persons who got special needs or need rehabilitation services that meet the basic needs in society because impairment such as sensory function, movement function and mental function brings physical, social, psychological, economical disability” (Sobeih, 2002, p.4).

Osman et al. (1969) defined the disabled person as any person who differs from normal individuals in the physical, mental or social features to the degree that necessitates special rehabilitation action to make him/her achieve maximum potentials and abilities. Evidently, as the words ‘mental’ and ‘physical’ are used rather openly, it is debated that this definition is yet narrow in scope in the sense that it does not include people with hidden or sensory impairments. Additionally, by referring to people who are ‘different from the normal’ Osman et al. (1969) suggest that people with ‘mental’ or ‘physical’ impairments are in a sense ‘abnormal’. Hence, the meaning of normalcy appears to be formed by an individualistic medical perspective of biological functioning and limitations.

Another definition is given by Abdel Nour (1973) who defines the person with disability as the individual in which one or even more disabling difficulty have existed in, which weakened his/her capability and made him/her in vital need for external or institutional help based on technological and scientific basis to provide him/her to normal level or as near as possible to normal level (Abdel Nour, 1973). As in Osman et al. (1969), he views disability as emerging from within the individual (personal tragedy) and not from the external surroundings. Furthermore, when he refers to the disabled person as the individual who ‘require external help’, he is implying to other elements of the population. This evades the truth that everyone requires external support to live (Hagrass, 2005).

2.3 Participation, Empowerment and Social Inclusion

2.3.1 Participation and Empowerment

According to Wallerstein (1992), empowerment is a social-action process which promotes participation of people, communities and organizations towards the goals of increased individual and community control, political effectiveness, improved quality of community life, and social justice. For many of the people with disabilities, their social exclusion and isolation started early in life and was experienced at home, school, and in the community which generated a sense of

powerlessness. Having accessibility to the same resources and opportunities as the other community members is important for the process of people's empowerment. In fact, participation extensively enhances the process of empowerment for people with disability. As people with disability grow their self-confidence, they seek more opportunities for participation and their involvement in community activity would consequently enhances their sense of personal control and self-confidence (Lord and Hutchison, 1993).

The conception of both participation and empowerment do display understandings about the description and nature of power (Lang, 2000). Freire (1970) maintained that in any society, the social transformation and the freeing of the marginalized groups, can only be achieved when these groups unite together to think and contemplate on their state of affairs and jointly plan for making a change. This development can occur regardless of the level or scale of oppression experienced, but as long as an efficient learning atmosphere exists (Freire, 1970).

There are two basics for the social transformation. The first being empowerment which can solely be realized by means of a combined and collective group processes (Freire and Shor, 1987). It needs a collective awareness of the shared interests and creating of a strategy for social change, which is reached through collective means. Additionally, empowerment cannot be provided to an oppressed group. Secondly, the role of the facilitator is crucial for social transformation. The facilitator in this case can be a local NGO personnel. People with disability together with the NGO professionals and the local community would cooperate with each other and through this cooperation and interaction of the three, the capabilities of the people with disabilities become more acknowledged first by themselves and also by their community. Ultimately, disabled people are able to empower themselves and take the decisions that would directly influence their lives and eventually protect their human rights (Stone, 1999). In this context, Lang (2000) argued that NGOs have performed a crucial and important role in empowering the people with disability through the provision of the community based disability services.

2.3.2 Social Inclusion

As previously highlighted by Lang (2000) that NGOs can actually be an effective player in the social transformation and empowerment of the people with disability. Social exclusion is also associated with a number of conceptions that were developed in relation to disability studies. Consequently, it is claimed by the disability movement that people with disability are methodically excluded from the current society as a result of the negative social attitudes that they

face and meet, in addition to the unfriendly or unwelcoming physical environment in which they live in (Lang, 2000).

Ebersold (2014) recognized these developmental themes while discussing social participation of people with disabilities: the development of communication for better collaboration of people with disabilities, the improvement of inter-institutional and interpersonal relations via individual participation and full involvement in the communities and organizations activities and the promotion of social inclusion through personal empowerment. Thus the main activity of the community is to enable a person by helping him/her to reveal their strengths and limit their weaknesses (Ruškus and Mazeikis, 2007)

Local NGOs attempts to cover shortcomings of governments through encouraging the participation of the people with disability and the community as well as supporting access to community based rehabilitation services by means of a range of strategies. These strategies involve attitude change, community education and training, community and resource mobilization; building capacities, social and economic empowerment; lobbying and advocacy and information dissemination and networking. Through these means, local NGOs can be acting as an important role in connecting the community, society and the disabled hence facilitates social participation and eventually empowerment (Kandyomunda et al., 2010).

According to Ilieva, (2006), local NGOs can play an important role is promoting the social model of disability as well as in tackling the different psychological and environmental barriers that people with disabilities constantly meet. The social model of disability impact in education can be seen mainly through advocating for the inclusion of all children, eradicating the obstacles faced by people with disabilities like inaccessible working and education environments, inequitable social and health support services and eradicating negative images of people with disabilities in the media (Ilieva, 2006).

Such support and strategies result in change for disabled people and the people in the community as the majority of people in the community have no understanding about disability issues nor are they accepting the disabled people as their equals. Thus local NGO programs can support in the change of community attitudes and improve the lives of disabled people. Local and small disability focused NGOs have got a unique stand to aid this development (Kandyomunda et al., 2010)

Chapter 3

3. Literature Review

The worldwide problems of disability, poverty, and unemployment stem out of the interaction of multiple factors including social stigma, stereotyping as well as lack of access to enabling environments (Abidi and Sharma, 2014). It is extremely important when speaking about empowerment, to present and discuss the stereotypical image often applied to persons with disabilities as well as beliefs about people with disabilities which can create barriers that limits person with disabilities contributions and participation in society (Thomson, 2000).

Additionally, since disability is viewed as a developmental issue given that people with disability are usually seen as excluded from mainstream economic and social opportunities due to the fact that they lack proper schooling and access to paid employment which increases their risk of falling into poverty. Given this, a singular approach towards tackling these interrelated issues falls short.

As such, the structure of this chapter will first attempt to cover literature around societal attitudes which are a cross-cutting issue in the lives of people with disabilities. Secondly, the literature will discuss the discourse surrounding the employment of disabled people as well as education highlighting the correlation of disability, societal attitudes, employment and education. Thirdly, the literature will reflect on non-governmental organizations with particular reference to disabled people.

3.1 Societal Attitudes

"People with disabilities regularly identify societal attitudes as the most potent and negative stressor in their lives..." (Voh, 1993, p.65).

When reviewing the literature on societal attitudes and disability, several scholars agreed that negative societal attitudes towards people with disabilities still exists and that social attitudes reflected the view that persons with disabilities were defective, unhealthy and abnormal and that for years, society has regarded and treated these people as objects of pity or fear thus the prevailing attitude was that these individuals were incapable of contributing to society or participating in it and that they must depend on charitable organizations and welfare (Bartner, 2014) .

Abu Habib (1997) claimed that negative societal myths continue to portray that a person with a disability is incapable, incompetent or less worthy in all aspects of life. Some other literature discussed that traditionally, in many cultures around the world, people with physical, mental impairments or sensory were perceived as possessed by evil spirits or under the spell of sorcery or as remorseful sinners who are being punished by God for wrong-doing by themselves or their parents. Other literature stated that decades ago Egyptians were disposed to hide their children with disabilities due to stigma (Endrawes et al., 2007).

Other literature discussed societal attitudes from the gender prospective i.e. attitudes toward women with disabilities and how the society even looks down on women with disabilities, no one wants to accompany them and that their families are ashamed of them (Mizrachi, 2014). Some other literature adds how these negative societal attitudes are harder towards women in the Middle East whereas Turmusani (1999) adds that women with disabilities are viewed as burdens in many communities in the Arab region throughout the Middle East.

The societal attitudes towards disabled women are mostly unfavourable when compared to those towards men with disability. A woman with disability commonly becomes the center of concern for the whole family, not for her own sake and benefit, but for the protection of the family honour. Many of the disabled in the Middle East community suffers from stigmatization, low status and discrimination (Mizrachi, 2014).

More recent studies have documented the fact that employers perceive the visually impaired or blind persons to be difficult to hire for particular positions (Gilbride et al., 2000). These studies back the perception that the visually impaired or blind persons experience attitudinal barriers from employers (McDonnall et al., 2014).

The main rationale in the literature behind existing negative attitudes is that some scholars claim that the terminologies like disability or impairment or handicap - all of which describe disability conditions that created and formed the classification of “functioning with a disability”, is actually the rationale behind forming the society’s existing, and mostly negative, attitudes and beliefs (Seligman and Darling, 2007)

Many scholars view that both traditional and medical disability models, depicted disabilities as a negative phenomenon and suggest that society stereotypes the disabled (Zidan, 2012) in the sense

that the 'medical model' views the disabled people as the problem, who have to be adapted to fit into the world as it is or should be isolated at home or shut away in a specialized institution where there is stress on dependence, supported by the stereotypes of disability that bring out fear, pity and patronizing attitudes (Zidan, 2012).

Phemister and Crew (2004) stated that societal attitudes have existed for centuries, but social scientists only began to study them in the 1960s. They add that many researchers have studied social stigma aiming to understand its complexity and effect on people, particularly on people with disabilities, as it has become one of the key problems for many developmentally disabled people (Phemister and Crew, 2004).

Most of literature agrees that stigma can even interfere with the lives of people with disability and negatively impact their well-being (Mak and Cheung, 2008). Kondrate and Teater (2009) argue that social stigmas prohibit people with disability from participating in society, both professionally and socially, limit the opportunities for people with disabilities and accordingly public stigma encourages them even to self-stigmatize based on society's perspective of them (Kondrate and Teater, 2009). In this sense as well, women with disabilities are faced with additional discrimination and are disadvantaged socially, economically and psychologically extensively more than men with disabilities or other abled women (Westhaver, 2000).

Nowicki (2006) stresses the fact that as long as negative societal attitudes and stigma persist, the full and rightful acceptance of people with disabilities is unlikely. However, according to Marks (1997), the first step in reducing prejudice is the recognition that persons with disabilities are still exposed to and oppressed by prejudice and discrimination from other members in the society.

3.2 Disability and Employment

“There is universal agreement that disabled people do not have the same access to jobs as the rest of the population” (Oliver, 2004, pp.18-31)

Some literature discussed the employer knowledge of and attitudes toward employees who are visually impaired and how the negative myths and stereotypes created prejudices toward people with disabilities. As Rao (2004) describes, these prejudices are often reflected in negative attitudes and behavior which hinders and obstructs the participation of people with disabilities in social, educational and vocational contexts.

Many scholars (for example, Crudden and McBroom, 1999; Kirchner et al., 1997; McDonnall, 2013; Salomone and Paige, 1984) have reviewed the extensive range of barriers faced by people with disabilities to access the job market suggesting that part of the problem is that because individual disabled people are promoted as different from other members of the labour force so the traditional divisions between them and non-disabled workers are deepened, highlighted and magnified (Barnes et al., 1998).

Scholars extensively covered how the people with disabilities can experience different barriers and obstacle like environmental obstacles which make physical access to employment hard and that some are even unable to afford the daily travel costs to and from work (Roberts and Babinard, 2004). On the other hand, there may also be other physical barriers which relates to job interviews, to attending social events with fellow employees or to the actual work setting (ILO, 2014).

Relevant literature (for example, ILO, 2007; Cramm and Finkelflügel, 2008) highlighted how a lack of access to funding can be a major barrier for people with disability wanting to even set up a business as entrepreneurs in the sense that potential lenders do wrongly regard people with disabilities to be high risks for loans. Shier et al (2009) adds that misconceptions about the ability of people with disabilities to perform jobs are an important reason both for their continued unemployment or – if employed – for their exclusion from promotion opportunities in their professional careers.

There is a long history of measuring attitudes toward persons with disabilities, which began in the late 1950s (Antonak and Livneh, 1988). Although there is a large body of literature that involves the measurement of employer attitudes toward persons with disabilities, research in this area specific to persons who are blind or visually impaired is surprisingly limited (Gilbride et al., 2000). However, there are some limited recent research revealing that employers consider it very difficult for them to employ a person who is blind and they even perceive it more difficult to employ a person who is blind compared to a person with any other disabilities (Gilbride et al., 2000).

When reflecting on disability and employment it appears that there are many ways of conceptualizing the problem and apparently how a problem is framed will influence procedures

taken to eliminate it (Borsay, 1986). Lunt and Thorton (1994) introduced two ways of framing disability employment policy. The first approach is the traditional perspective which individualizes the issues while the second approach attempts to frame the issues in their social context.

The first approach, regard the problem of disability as situated and positioned in the individual (Oliver, 1990) in the sense that the individual is portrayed in some way less than a whole and as deficient, and thus the employer need compensation in order to employ him/her while the other institutional problems are completely neglected, thus the issue becomes one of personal pathology. Thus the focus of intervention is the individual who then becomes the spot upon which change, alteration and rehabilitation takes place (Foucault, 1977). The individual is made economically and competitively disciplined. As a result, the problem is recognized in terms of individual impairments while the broader labour processes are seen as unchangeable. If an environmental modification is made, like change in work premises to become suitable for visually impaired people, then this modification usually has an individual person in mind and the individual's impairment drives the change. Holders of the individual perspective on disability may object to prejudice and discrimination against disabled people in the workplace; indeed, these objections may become reflected in anti-discrimination legislation. This individual perception of lack of opportunities has no institutional perspective; nor is disability recognized as being deeply rooted in the structure of social processes (Lunt and Thornton, 1994).

The other perspective of framing disability in relation to employment is viewed as being inter-subjectively socially constructed where the environment is regarded as being the spot of problems. The environment refers not only to built characteristics and physical but also includes characteristics like attitudes, organizational dimensions and work practices such as hours, task adaption and flexibility. Thus, using this understanding of disability, it is evident that certain environments do not offer groups of people with disabilities enough opportunities. Interventions are therefore structural and external rather than being internal to the individual (Lunt and Thornton, 1994).

Studies concerning knowledge about and use of workplace-aids for people with disabilities revealed that employers have very limited knowledge and awareness of the supports and accommodations that are available (Unger and Kregel, 2003). Employers may not even be aware of the available job accommodations in the form of assistive technology, adaptive techniques, or

environmental adaptations that empowers and assists a person who is blind or visually impaired to operate efficiently at work. Without this knowledge about job accommodations, employers tend to have a difficulty understanding how a person who is visually impaired or blind can perform the jobs for which they hire.

Different types of legislative measures relate to disability employment policy. It is obvious that there are two prevailing legislative approaches covered in most literature relates to those of the USA, Canadian and Australian type and to those of the Western-European type (Lunt and Thornton, 1994). The former tend to be those legislative approaches that have mainly anti-discrimination legislation in which disability employment policy is located and where employment policies admit the rights of disabled people and pursues to eliminate discrimination against them. Whereas the Western-European type, has an approach to disability policies which is linked to policy interests of specific departments of governments. The majority of European Commission countries got an approach to employment policy that comprises legal requirements and is best distinguished by the quota system and reserved employment (Lunt and Thornton, 1994).

It is clear that most of available literature - that scholars contributed- have covered the difficulties faced by people with impairments who wish to enter the labour market as well as employment policies and legislation. Yet there is a literature gap with reference to role of NGOs in empowering the visually impaired and overcoming barriers to employment and very limited articles to evaluating the role of NGOs in general. Moreover, there is no literature considering the role that NGOs have and can potentially play in the social transformation of the visually impaired in Egypt.

3.3 Disability and Education

According to the 2008 Education for All Global Monitoring Report, it clarifies the extensive progress made towards gender parity and universal enrolment in education in the developing countries (UNESCO, 2008). However, until recently, many studies reveal that the impact of disability has been to some extent neglected in relation to education in the global south (Bines and Lei, 2011).

Literature highlights the fact that the educational status for young people with disabilities is mainly bad in certain countries – for example, fragile states (Trani et al., 2011). Young people

with disabilities encounter a range of disadvantage as they experience educational marginalization and exclusion throughout the education cycle from early childhood forwards (Lei and Myers, 2011).

Inclusion has become a prevailing concept in both the literature and in policies, however, it is rather a complex issue and there is no one consistent approach to inclusive education (Peters, 2004). Inclusive Education is a system-wide approach (Miles, 1999) committed to making schools responsive and accessible to the learning of all students. The philosophy of inclusive education is grounded on the right of all individuals to a quality education with equal opportunity — an education that progresses their potential and respects their human dignity. After the Salamanca statement Action Plan (1994), it has been debated that all students with disabilities should be educated entirely within ordinary classrooms through full inclusion (Lipsky and Gartner, 1996). Moreover, inclusion is not a state that can be reached but rather a process that should be improved and developed to the most extent possible. Also, inclusive education is not an end in itself, but a means to an end, that is the fulfillment of an inclusive society (Barton, 2003). A number of government education initiatives focused on or included children with disability but many of which are directed on one particular type of disability (Dessent, 1987).

There is however, other literature which states that inclusive education is not always a positive experience. It has been highlighted that in low-income countries, supporters of special schools such as schools for the blind often point to the fact that these institutions provide high-quality specialized learning environments (WHO, 2011). Some scholars argue that often the best environment for academic and social development for a visually impaired child is a school where both students and teachers can better communicate. The thinking is that simple placement in a regular school, without meaningful interaction with classmates and professionals would exclude the visually impaired learner from education and society rather than include them.

While inclusion is generally regarded as including all children with disabilities in mainstream schools, in Egypt, the concept of inclusion and inclusive education and the methods of its application are still blurred. The term is rather used to mean partial inclusion (Gaad, 2011). Partial inclusion is the establishing of special classrooms for learners with special needs in main stream schools. Part of the school day comprises separating students with disabilities in special classes, and part integrating them with their non-disabled colleagues. One of the main aims of the Egyptian National Plan (Ministry of Education, 2007) was to include all children with special

needs into main stream education. Yet, because of lack of sufficient resources and finance as well as the lack of awareness and understanding of the benefits of inclusion, special schools are nevertheless the most commonly used system for educating people with a visual impairment in Egypt (El Messiri, 2006)

Very limited literature covers the education barriers in Egypt. Most literature are law focused stating that the Ministry of Education has to establish schools and classes to educate disabled students according to their special needs (Shukr Allah et al., 1997).

Historically, Al-Azhar religious system was the main educational system in Egypt until 1800. In Egypt, Al-Azhar schools have played a significant role in delivering and offering inclusive education to the visually impaired people. Since its establishment in the 9th century, all visually impaired and blind children are accepted in Al- Azhar institutes and they study the same curricula as their sighted colleagues in addition to the religious curricula. Moreover, the graduates of the Al-Azhar secondary schools are eligible to continue their studies at Al-Azhar University only (Hassanein, 2015).

Policy and provision in much of the northern countries are now grounded, at least in policy terms, on inclusion, as a means of both decreasing separate special provision and responding to the range of learning needs in ordinary schools, though separated special schooling persists in many such countries (Bines and Lei, 2011).

The Index for Inclusion ¹ which has been used in a range of northern and southern countries, indicates that it is valuable to think in terms of schools needing to promote an inclusive culture, develop inclusive policies and inclusive practices and highlights the importance of drawing on the wider resources of the community and parents to support inclusion (Booth et al., 2000).

Some literature reveals that teachers, though positive regarding the general philosophy of inclusive education, do not agree on a total inclusion approach to special educational provision. Alternatively, they possess differing attitudes about school placements, largely based on the nature of the students' disabilities. Teachers are more disposed to include students with physical/sensory or mild disabilities or impairments than students with more complex needs (Avramidis and Norwich, 2002)

¹ The Index for Inclusion is a set of materials to support schools in a process of inclusive school development, drawing on the views of staff, governors, school students, parents/carers and other community members.

However, if inclusion is not always possible, Urwick and Elliott (2010) suggest the creation of multi-layered special education that is able to provide different levels and types of support depending on the needs and requirements of different individuals. Whereas, it needs to be recognized that students with disabilities may need extra levels and types of support, there needs to be more examination if developing countries can really afford such high level services (Unterhalter and Brighouse, 2007).

Many other scholars (for example, Barton, 2003; Giffard-Lindsay, 2007, Evans and Lunt, 2002; Buysse et al., 1998) revealed that it has been argued that there is a need to identify the barriers and challenges to inclusion as a way to amend policy and developing practices. Apparently, the process of change is complex and rooted in the nature of the educational system and the cultural context in which change is needed. Allan (2003) argued that the achievement of an inclusive educational system is considered a major challenge facing many countries around the world and that the process of developing such inclusive educational system needs extensive personal, cultural and organizational changes.

Many studies (for example, White et al, 2006; Rubin et al., 1995; Rusch et al., 1995) have depicted the strength of negative practices and attitudes towards people with disabilities in certain development contexts – attitudes and practices formed by multiple factors, including traditional cultures (Braathen and Ingstad, 2006). These negative attitudes and practices in turn lead to educational exclusion and marginalization of young people with disabilities (Le Fanu, 2014). This educational exclusion and marginalization blocks young people with disabilities from having the various types of human capital that will aid them to manage a successful adult lives (Singal et al., 2011). In particular, they often fight to secure paid employment then they become dependent on family-members who might themselves be having difficulty to earn a living (Wehbi and El-Yahib, 2007). Many researchers claim that there are still many gaps between policy and provision, and that disability still remains a significant factor in exclusion from schooling and education (Bines and Lei, 2011).

Three approaches to policies on disability and education: charity/welfare, rights and equity and utility (societal benefit and/or educational efficiency) are recognized. Out of the three, charity is the most traditional. Approaches established on equity and rights are more recent which can be associated to international declarations on the rights of children and people with disabilities and

other groups. Approaches based on the utility of societal benefit and educational efficiency are usually presented as complementary or additional rationales, most often to highlight issues of rights and equity (Bines and Lei, 2011).

Gibson (2006) asserts that persons with disabilities have traditionally experienced systematic institutional victimization from all sides of society including the educational system as well as the workforce. Findings showed that students with visual disabilities desire to participate in communication practices that demonstrate respect, awareness and comfort. For example, they would like teachers and other students to show them respect, and they wish to be treated as others would want to be treated—no better, no worse. Findings show that many visually impaired students do not want special treatment, the students highlighted that they are neither superhuman nor to be pitied (Myers, 2009). Furthermore, increasing understanding and awareness of visual impairment makes both teachers and other students become more confident and comfortable in their interactions relations and communication with students who are visually impaired or blind

3.4 Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

Non Governmental Organizations are difficult to define and classify as the terminology NGO is not all the time used systematically. For example, in several countries the terminology NGO is used to refer to an organization that in other country is likely named a nonprofit organization. Additionally, there is other various categorization of NGO in usage. Non Governmental Organization, Private Voluntary Organization, Non Profit Organization are the largely used terminologies and sometimes utilized interchangeably although opposed definitions (Singh and Sethi, 2012)

According to the UN (1945), all types of private organizations that are independent from government power can be recognized as NGOs. NGOs should not seek to moderate a nation's government in the outline of an opposing political party. NGOs also need to be non-profit and non-criminal.

Willets (1996, p.5) defines NGO as "a self-governing voluntary organization of citizens working together on a constant basis for various shared objectives but not including doing illegal actions, acquiring money or government office". The World Bank (1990) defines NGO as an institution or group of individuals operating free of any outside control with certain aims and objective to achieve duties that are directed to generate a wanted and needed transformation in a particular

society or region or situation. An NGO is defined as an institution which is not only non-governmental, but it is as well a non-for-profit (Thomas et al., 2001).

Another definition by the WHO which defines the NGO as an organization which do not have representation or membership by government, that acts and toils for the advantage of its members or for other individuals of the general public, and can also be recognized as a civil society organization (WHO, 2011). NGOs -which are sometimes also recognized as private not-for-profit or civil society organizations or voluntary organizations- have showed up where governments have not been successful to deliver particular needs. Their advantages involve their prospect for specialization, responsiveness and innovation (WHO, 2011). Local NGOs could also be regarded as humanitarian and indigenous associations set up and founded by the local community individuals, local professionals or a blend of both classes (Kandyomunda et al., 2010).

Some literature highlighted the developments of the role played by NGOs during the past forty years (Korten, 1987). The early generation of NGOs, created in the consequences of the First World War and which was mainly interested with the delivery of humanitarian welfare and support. The second generation of NGOs created in the 1970s directed their efforts for setting up community based developmental programs and projects (Korten, 1987). The third generation efforts were directed towards supporting continuous and sustainable transformations and putting forth better leadership in tackling the non operating parts of policies of the areas within which they operate. Korten (1987) further recognized a fourth generation of NGOs – NGOs that concentrates its efforts on a people-centred developments that are more similar to approaches directed to education, empowerment of the disabled, the poor and the marginalized groups and social transformation. These NGOs are also connected with what is recognized as 'self-help groups' (Korten, 1987).

It is also noticed that the past two decades have seen a huge rise in the number of NGOs. Despite this huge rise in the number and size of NGO activities during the past decade, yet Lang (2000) probes and questions their efficiency in accomplishing their declared and announced objectives as well as questioning their accountability in the sense that to whom these NGOs are accountable to. Both these debates are considered of key concern to the evolution of the argument related to participation and empowerment of the disabled, the poor and the marginalized groups (Lang, 2000).

3.5 NGOs and Disability

Lee (1999) notes that, tackling and working out the disability issues is so vital as this is considered important to all aspects and features of development which includes human rights, equality, empowerment, marginalization and poverty. Literature acknowledged that NGOs have performed a big role in the development of services for the people with disabilities globally. In many cases, this role has been played especially in the lack of government contribution where in many cases it took a charity-based or institutional approach (Kandyomunda et al., 2010)

Singh and Sethi (2012) have classified and highlighted the different NGOs working in the field of disabilities into three groups which are:

1-Organizations for Persons with Disabilities were commonly established by philanthropists, usually charity or medically based, are likely to be concentrating on specific impairment groups and are believed to have been existing on the ground for the longest period of time (Singh and Sethi, 2012). It is also known as DPOs where the people with disability comprise the greater part of the overall number of board and staff (WHO, 2011).

2-Organizations of People with Disabilities / Specific impairment organizations were also established on the base of a single disability, for instance, organizations dealing with the hearing or visually impairments (Singh and Sethi, 2012). However, Yeo and Moore (2003) highlighted that these institutions have usually worked and operated mainly on the prevention or cure of impairment rather than issues like poverty or participation.

3-Associations of the Parents of Children with Disabilities have appeared as a result of community based rehabilitation services. These associations were shaped as a result of a needed feeling from parents of children with disabilities who could not be fitted within the organizations for persons with disabilities nor that of Organizations for Persons with Disabilities (Singh and Sethi, 2012).

4-Independent sector also known as civil society, volunteer sector, private voluntary organizations or self- help organizations (Singh and Sethi, 2012).

Recently, apart from the medically and charity based NGOs, more NGOs can offer community-based and user driven programs seeking to support participation by people with disabilities in their

communities (WHO, 2011). Kandyomunda et al, (2010) stated that contribution by the local NGOs has been very important in the provision of community based rehabilitation programs and that NGOs perform a very important task in the education, training and employment of the people with disabilities (Kandyomunda et al., 2010)

Moreover, in many circumstances, NGOs can team up and act with governments seeking to provide services and support for people with disabilities. However, Harriss-White (1999) identifies several limitations in totally depending only on NGOs to encounter the desires and requirements of people with disabilities. These limitations may be due to the fact that these NGOs have moderately small and unsustainable funding, their services are discretionary and sometimes unsystematic. Thirdly, they are modestly regulated and some of them still think of disability as an expert's matter which they are not qualified to deal with (Yeo and Moore, 2003).

Local NGOs and non-profits have in the past two decades increased in numbers and broadened their range of operations in all characteristics of human development need which has influenced the status quo of the people centred approach towards development. Accordingly, this range of activities by local NGOs has backed a greater participation of people with disabilities and their families. This resulted to a higher level of comprehension of the approaches in which the people of disabilities were previously isolated or excluded from the ordinary society. Hence, more 'advocacy based' and 'rights' activities have grown (Kandyomunda et al., 2010)

Despite that some literature has reviewed the extensive range of barriers faced by people with disabilities, however, it is found that literature researching the Egyptian context is very limited. Detailed statistics on the situation of people with disabilities in Egypt are not available. This has resulted in a rather very limited knowledge of the numbers and status of disabled people in Egyptian society. The limited literature is rather law focused covering the Egyptian Disability laws which dates date back to the 1950 of the last century as a form of response to the International Declaration of Human rights as well as 1975 law 39. There are limited researches to discuss education as well employment problems for the people with disability and visually impaired in Egypt. Additionally, there is no literature to evaluate role of local NGOs in Egypt. This lack of clarity inevitably influences the work of policy makers when they are formulating laws and policies directed at services and support for disabled people.

Hence, this study is an important contribution for a number of reasons. First, the study provides an in-depth analyses to the issues of visually impaired as seen by local NGOs themselves. Second,

the study will help academics, researchers, NGOs, and the government of Egypt to better understand and evaluate the current role of local NGOs in empowering the visually impaired people. Third, the study will help in stimulating further research in this topic. Finally, the study provides recommendations to local NGOs and the government.

Chapter 4

4-Research Methodology

4.1 The methodology

The methodology used in the study is qualitative method. Semi structured in- depth interviews were conducted with five local Egyptian NGOs that have got experience and are already working in the field of visual impairment aiming to better understand their work, identifying the challenges facing the visually impaired in Egypt, finding out how NGOs address these challenges, finding out what are the challenges that these local NGOs face and also investigating if they have a role in impacting policy making. Questions were prepared before the interviews in order to make sure that all important questions are answered. However, there was also a room for more probing questions which helped the researcher to have more information.

4.2 Sample selection and composition

Purposeful as well as snowball sampling (also described as chain referral) were used to reach out these five local NGOs. Purposive sampling is proper to choose and decide on distinctive cases that are particularly informative. Purposeful sampling is used when a researcher would like to detect specific types of cases for in-depth investigation (Neuman, 2011). The five local NGOs selected were reached through deep research and through referrals and/or word of mouth. In some cases I interviewed an NGO and the staff of that NGO would connect me to other NGOs working in the field. Since the objective of the research is to evaluate the role that local NGOs play in empowering the visually impaired in Egypt so the selection of the five local NGOs was based on the selection criteria that they all have experience and are already working in the field of empowering persons with disabilities to access education as well as employability.

Some of these NGOs have focused their activities on education empowerment only, while others work on both education and employability. Moreover, one of the interviewed NGOs is also a member at the National Council for Disability Affairs so I also asked about the role of the National Council for Disability Affairs in policy making.

The majority of the local NGOs in Egypt that are working with persons with disability are generally set up by philanthropists which focused on specific impairment groups and were charity or medically based such as the traditional organizations and/or religious organizations. However, this was not my focus. My focus was local NGOs that have got activities in education and employment.

Moreover, the qualitative method and purposeful sampling is appropriate to this study for the following reasons. First, the number of local NGOs and initiatives working in the field of empowering visually impaired to access education and employability is very minimal. There is no known previous research undertaken about the role of local NGOs in Egypt in empowering visual impaired. Unlike other local NGOs working broadly in the field of education programs in general or gender issues whom researchers can easily find NGOs to interview.

The interviews were conducted in the NGO premises to ensure privacy. I had to first build rapport with the interviewees and to describe clearly the objectives of the research to avoid any ambiguity about research outcomes. The questions were open ended and I did not find any problems in getting answers to my research questions. I asked relevant probing questions and the interviewees were very engaging and willing to help me in my research and even some of them showed appreciation to this kind of research. With some NGOs, I had to translate the questions into Arabic. I took notes rather than recording which was more comfortable to use with these NGOs. The five NGOs were very open, helpful and were responding to all the questions.

The study adheres to common ethical considerations in research. The five NGOs had no problem to mention the name of their NGOs. However, for the interviewed staff, I used codes instead of their own names to ensure their privacy by not revealing identification information about the interviewees, for example (Founder, NGO 1).

The five local NGOs interviewed were the DASEN, the Helm, the Egyptian Parents Association for the Visually Impaired, the Al Nour Wal Amal and the Fagr Al Tanweer. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) has granted approval for the study research prior to data collection. Here is some background information about each of the included NGOs;

1-DAESN: which stands for the Development Association for Empowering Persons with Special Needs. DAESN is a non-governmental organization that was established in 2008. Its objective is developing the capabilities of the visually impaired people in order to lead an independent life as well as integrating the visually impaired individuals into the working society. DAESN aims to strengthen the living standard of persons with special needs by means of socio-economic projects via an environment of accessibility and improving technical competence (DAESN, 2012).

2-Helm: which translates to (Dream) in Arabic is a non-profit organization aiming to promote the full inclusion of persons with disabilities in all aspects of life as well as to promote employment and the participation of people with disabilities in all features of life. Helm's vision is to develop to become a leading career and development NGO in Egypt that guarantee the employment and development of people with disabilities in a wide range of employment opportunities and careers and at the same time enable the office environment to focus on their needs (Helm, 2015).

3- Egyptian Parents Association for the Visually Impaired: is a non-profit organization whose vision is to empower visually impaired persons to achieve equal rights as the sighted peer by means of rehabilitating and mainstreaming them in a society that is able of dealing with them as a productive and independent people (EPAVI, 2015).

4- Al Nour Wal Amal: which translates to (Light and Hope) in Arabic is one of the oldest non-governmental organization in Egypt that was established in 1954 and one of the first non-governmental organizations in the Middle East to support and aid visually impaired girls and women. The organization provides them with education, care, vocational training, job opportunities and integration within the society. It is also very well known globally by helping young girls to enhance their musical talents on an academic basis (Ahram online, 2015)

5- Fajr Al Tanweer Association for the Blind: is a non-profit organization that was founded on 2002. It is one of the first associations in Egypt whom its leaders are visually impaired. The association aims at investing the abilities and power of the visually impaired and empowering them to get an equal job and social opportunities. This is achieved through providing rehabilitation and a range of training and development courses in different areas of communication, language, human resources, technology, vocational and arts (FAAB, 2015)

4.3 Limitations of the Study

All the five local NGOs interviewed for the research have their offices in Cairo. Only one of them has offices in other governorates at Dakahlia, Tanta, Port Said and Bani Suef. After thorough and deep investigation and asking if there are other local NGOs working in empowering visually impaired in other governorates, the answer was none. Only a few exist in governorates but whose activity is limited to charity work only. As the main focus of the study is the role of NGOs and due to time constraint, interviews were limited to local NGOs only rather than governmental bodies.

Chapter 5

5. Data Analysis and Research Findings

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings obtained from the research, by digging deep and setting out the issues that face the disabled and visually impaired in Egypt from the eyes of the local NGOs working in Egypt which are linked to existing literature yet my research went deep to find out other issues and details as outlined by local NGOs in Egypt and which were not reflected in the previous chapters. It is extremely important to dig deep and highlight what these issues are as this helps in understanding the role that these local NGOs play in empowering the visually impaired and how they can empower them.

Five NGOs are examined, to provide five case studies of NGOs experiences with empowering visually impaired people in Egypt. The case studies attempted to investigate the role of the NGOs and to start drawing conclusions about the effectiveness of their activities and efforts and how they can facilitate change. Moreover, through my research and interviews, I find out what is the Egyptian model for disability. Findings presented in this chapter successfully address the research questions set for this study, as well as provide additional insights related to disability issues in Egypt.

5.1 Visually Impaired Issue in Egypt in the Context of the Local NGOs:

The purposefully chosen samples of the local NGOs were interviewed as part of this study and were asked about the challenges in the domain of education for the visually impaired as well as challenges facing the local NGOs. The respondents shared a similar sense of dissatisfaction while describing the current practices, which apparently has many flaws.

Education:

"It is very difficult to find schools that accepts visually impaired students in Egypt " (Local NGO 2).

Surprisingly, one major issue for visually impaired children is the difficulty even to find a school that admits the visually impaired student to pursue their study. Despite the official adoption of Inclusive Education and the fact that Inclusive Education in Egypt has been legalized as a

consequence of issuing the Inclusion Mandates in 2009 and since then schools in Egypt should have had to act in response to the mandates by admitting students with disabilities in preschool and primary school (Emam and Hemdan, 2011). Respondents offered a totally different rationale for inclusive education than the one offered by literature. Indeed, all the local NGOs interviewed did not hesitate before sharing a generally common answer, which mainly highlighted that the Inclusion Mandates is just on paper but in reality schools do not accept any kind of handicap and visually impaired children are always transferred to their own special schools and accordingly inclusive education at schools is not applicable in Egypt and that the primary model used in the provision of special education services in Egypt is the segregation model.

Some literature (for example, Avramidis and Norwich, 2002; Gilmore et al., 2003; Hastings and Oakford, 2003; Taylor et al., 2003; Hammond et al., 2003) agree that teachers, although positive towards the viewpoint of inclusive education, yet they do not share a 'total inclusion' approach to the educational provision. One NGO added that among the reasons why schools refuse to have visually impaired children were their perception that it is difficult to deal with visually impaired children. Another point of view was that, schools in Egypt are reluctant to accept visually impaired students simply because these schools do not know how to include. The inclusive education in Egypt is not applicable simply because the lack of 'know how' as expressed by one of the respondents:

"There is no education for the educators themselves"
(Founder, Local NGO 3).

This same local NGO founder strongly stressed the fact that the core of the issue lies in the 'teacher' – in the sense that teachers who teach for the visually impaired children are not well trained nor have knowledge of inclusive education. The respondent claimed that this is due to the fact that the science of rehabilitation of the disability in Egypt has stopped and been lagging behind since long time ago. As clearly described by the founder of local NGO 3:

"The science of rehabilitation of disability in Egypt stopped
since the days of the King" (Founder, Local NGO 3).

Moreover, there are no faculties in Egypt that are specialized in graduating teachers who are qualified and specialized in teaching students with visual impairment. Teachers who teach visually impaired have usually taken an outdated training course on how to teach the visually impaired. Therefore, in some cases the quality of education provided to the visually impaired even

in specialized schools is not good. One of the respondents told me the following:

"Teachers teaching visually impaired in Egypt are given a very outdated training courses" (Founder, Local NGO 3).

Additionally, local NGO3 believes that most information passed to teachers in these training courses are usually wrong, weak and outdated thus it produces unqualified teachers and accordingly not able to provide the quality of education needed for the visually impaired. There are now modern ways and technologies for teaching the visually impaired which unfortunately is not taking place in Egypt.

However, in contrary to the literature review, all NGOs agreed with the common view that the special schools in Egypt helps the visually impaired student to be more socially included rather than other regular schools that could be applying inclusive education yet it is not qualified to support the visually impaired and thus in reality it excludes the child. At special schools, the visually impaired students manage to make friends with their peers who share the same kind of disability and the school system is more equipped, qualified and friendly and above all more accepting to the child rather than other regular schools. One of the respondents stated that:

"Regular schools are not equipped nor qualified to support the visually impaired child. How do you expect a school that has 70 children in one class to be inclusive!"
(Local NGO 5)

The idea of shadow teacher² was a bit controversial. One of the NGOs highlighted the importance of the shadow teacher and that in some of the specialized schools, there are no shadow teachers which is considered an issue. However another NGO was strongly against the idea of the presence of the shadow teacher out of the belief that the visually impaired child must be dealt with like any other student.

So, in general, the visually impaired people in Egypt go to their own specialized schools. But even specialized education services reach only to a very small percentage of students with disabilities. One of the NGOs commented that the issue is not whether laws are implemented or not, the issue is that the quality of the education provided is very poor. Moreover, some of the schools remove some of the important subjects in the primary stage that non-disabled children take, assuming that

² A shadow teacher is an educational assistant who works directly with a single, special needs child during his/her early school years. These assistants understand a variety of learning disabilities and how to handle them accordingly.

by doing this, they are facilitating the education process. The visually impaired student is then given these subjects in the preparatory stage. However, this is harming the children with disability as these subjects are necessary to help the children with disability to get the necessary basic education and build his knowledge.

Moreover, the inclusive and specialized education system in Egypt has been criticized due to unavailability of facilities, special aids and equipment like Braille printers in addition to the absence of model curricula that can embrace diverse pupils. One NGO commented that a major issue is that there is also no system or methodology that gives the parents of visually impaired students the opportunity to follow up on their kids and find out how they are performing at school as other children.

Other issues were that some parents of non-visually impaired children do not support the idea of inclusive education. This agrees with the literature that "negative attitudes and practices in turn result in the educational marginalization and exclusion of young people with disabilities" (Le Fanu, 2014, p.72).

NGOs highlighted that early intervention is also very important with nearly 95 per cent of what the child learns, he/she learns it within his first three years but in some cases, parents are not aware of this fact especially in some poor and marginalized areas, due to lack of services and money, so parents are not able to intervene early. As pointed out by one of the local NGO founder:

"What the infant learns in his/her first three years is even more important than what they learn afterwards" (Founder, Local NGO 3).

One of the important comments was that local NGOs remarked that the government laws for inclusive education should have been examined and tested thoroughly way before being legalized. They added that unfortunately, many laws or policies are issued and implemented without being examined or studied first. This agrees with the literature review that claimed that many researchers still identify many gaps between policy and provision (Bines and Lei, 2011). Moreover, the local NGOs commented that the Egyptian government should consult the persons with disabilities first and include them in the consultation phase before legalizing these policies. Unfortunately, there is exclusion in consulting local NGOs and persons with disabilities before issuing laws and the government do not open the participation by the disabled persons themselves in the policy-making process which is another essential issue. One of the local NGOs added:

"Some government policies are not well-studied nor tested before being legalized"
(Local NGO1)

In terms of university education, in addition to the fact that in Egypt, students with special needs are not allowed to be enrolled in technical faculties yet they are also not accepted to all non-technical faculties, they can only access limited faculties assuming that students with disabilities will not succeed if Ministry of Higher Education admits them to some faculties. Some literature (for example, Abu Habib, 1997; Livneh and Antonak, 1997; Smart, 2002; Chen et al., 2002) agrees that negative societal myths and social prejudice still exists and continue to portray and suggest that a person with a disability is incompetent, incapable, and/or less worthy in all aspects of life.

Respondents also highlighted limited resources as a barrier for the visually impaired. For example, visually impaired face challenges with some university professors and university books which are not accessible as soft copies and which makes it very hard for visually impaired to follow the professors or carry on with their studies. One of the NGOs staff who is visually impaired himself commented that he himself had been struggling to get materials or books as soft copy and that he managed to get the books as soft copy only few days before the exams. Materials available in Braille at universities are also very limited and in many cases visually impaired have to carry the financial burden of paying extra expenses to get materials in Braille.

One of the main issues highlighted by the interviewed local NGOs is that in Egypt, there is no policy or law that pressures higher educational institutions to provide the necessary support to people with disabilities. For example, in the UK, colleges and universities are legally required not to discriminate against disabled students, and not to treat them less favorably than students without a disability. Under the Equality Act 2010, all universities and colleges have a duty to make reasonable adjustments to their services, so disabled students are not placed at a substantial disadvantage (Equality Act, 2010). However, in Egypt, there is no legal policy to support the people with disability in general.

Employment

All NGOs interviewed seemed to be very stressed with the fact that legally, there is a five percent quota on employers to hire people with disabilities, however, this law is not correctly put into effect. Respondents agreed that there is no effective penalizing system for employers who do not

put this law into effect. The only penalty is that employers has to pay EGP 100 to the government which is a very low amount of money so most of employers prefer to pay the penalty rather than employ the persons with disability.

Additionally, the society as well as the employers do not see the visually impaired as a person who is capable of working and delivering which agrees with the literature that employers consider blind or visually impaired persons to be difficult to hire (Gilbride et al., 2000). There are other challenges like unavailability of equipment or software programs that the visually impaired can use in work. Moreover, the geographical place of the work place is also an issue as sometimes when the employer is situated in a place which is considered distant from the visually impaired place of residence, they become less eager to go to work due to hardships they face with commuting as there is no decent equipped transportation system. Another issue is that employers pay the visually impaired very low wages unlike their peers so this makes the visually impaired so frustrated and does not encourage the visually impaired to work as stated by one of the respondents:

"Many visually impaired are frustrated because when they work, they are not equally paid as their other sighted peers. This is so frustrating to them" (Local NGO1)

Moreover, the law disregards that the visual impaired do hold different levels of academic degrees. The law is applied on all the persons with disability regardless of their academic degree. For example, an employer can accept two visually impaired to the same position although each of them have a different level of education (a holder of BA is treated the same as a holder of primary or preparatory education certificate). Many visually impaired regard this as a deficiency in the law and also unfair.

Many of the respondents viewed that, in many cases, the visually impaired like any other person do lack some skills which are needed to perform a job like weak English skills which may be a requirement for a job. Additionally, some do lack the incentive to work, lack of commitment due to sustain their job, this may be due to internal reasons like the person's own character or external reason like how the society views them.

Additionally, due to external factors, many visually impaired do not stay in one job for a long time. This is because many employers and co-workers do not have the necessary awareness on

how to deal with persons with disability so eventually when employers hire a person with disability, he/she feel socially excluded and eventually prefers to leave the job. In this context, one of the respondents told me the following:

"Some visually impaired employee may leave their job as a result of the lack of awareness from their sighted peers on disability issues or etiquette which makes them feel excluded"
(Local NGO 3)

In summary, when trying to understand the issues of visually impaired in Egypt in terms of employability, data reveals that the Egyptian context offers what Lunt and Thorton (1994) identified as the two ways of framing disability employment policy. The traditional perspective which individualizes the issues in the sense that the visually impaired is presented as in some way less than whole and as deficient and that focus is on environmental change such as making work premises suitable for visually impaired people. And the second approach which tries to place them in their social context where the environment refers not only to physical and built characteristics, but also includes attitudinal dimensions and work practices such as hours, flexibility and task adaption (Lunt and Thorton, 1994)

5.2 The Egyptian Model for Disability

The data collected from local NGOs also reveal that in Egypt still the medical model is the dominant model for dealing with people with disabilities and the visually impaired in particular. For example, in the Egyptian National Plan of the Ministry of Education, people with disabilities are still identified and classified according to the degree of their disabilities not through their learning needs. The plan categorized these people into three major types which are severe, mild and multiple disabilities (Ministry of Education, 2007).

Currently, inclusive education is the common trend globally, especially in the western countries that pursue the social model of disability. While inclusion is perceived as including all students with disabilities in mainstream schools yet the concept of inclusion and the methods or procedures of its application are still ambiguous in Egypt. One of the major objectives of the Egyptian National Plan by the Ministry of Education was to include all children with disabilities into mainstream education (Ministry of Education, 2007). Yet, due to the lack of resources and finance (El Messiri, 2006) in addition to the lack of comprehension and the awareness of the benefits of inclusion, special schools are yet the most extensively adopted system for the education of the people with a visual impairment in Egypt (Kholeif, 2012) . According to Reiser

(2002), special schools are considered illustration of the application of the medical model of disability.

As previously discussed, the Egyptian Ministry of Higher Education issued a decree specifying the exact faculties that those with special needs can join, stating that some of the technical faculties require and need special skills that the Egyptian Supreme Council of Universities know for sure that students with special needs cannot handle. This classification reveals that in the Egyptian Higher Education system still the medical model is the dominant model for dealing with the visually impaired. Still in Egypt, people with visual impairment are still seen as patients in need of treatment, in accordance with the medical model of disability.

The previously discussed individual and medical models of disability are also extremely deepened in many societies in Egypt. Still in many parts of Egypt especially outside Cairo and in rural marginalized areas, the persons with disabilities are widely viewed as objects of charity. In Egypt, charitable response to disability is regarded as morally acceptable and correct respond to a tremendous social problem. In Egypt and especially in Ramadan, there are so many TV and radio advertisements that encourage the people to donate or give charity to orphans and persons with disability. Unfortunately, in these advertisements, the person with disability is depicted as a person who needs financial help or charity to be able to either survive or buy an equipment or a person who needs medical treatment. This agrees with the medical model, which views people with disabilities as patients that require treatment (Oliver, 1983).

As per findings above that the Egyptian disability policy is still portrayed within the traditional individual medical model of disability framework with an assumption that disabled people's life chances and experiences are influenced solely by their impairment. Moreover, despite the fact that the quota system ensures that there are some job opportunities for disabled workers, however its application in real life practice is restrictive in the sense that it alienates the disabled workers from non-disabled colleagues, reduces their ability to compete in the open job market and, accordingly, does not promote equal opportunities in the workplace.

It is also evident that legislations and procedures are often not enforced and in many cases policies seem an empty reflection of what occurs in the documents that are issued by policy makers. Consequently, as per Hagrass reflected, it is argued that in Egyptian society, there is little real proof of the influence of the social model of disability in everyday life. Moreover, Egypt social

policies in many cases are non-existent so disabled people have little choices but to rely on their families for the care and support (Hagrass, 2005).

5.3 Role of NGOs in Empowering the Visually Impaired

With the weakening role or even sometimes absence of governments, some NGOs and non-profits try to play a role in empowering the disabled community either through the development of rehabilitation services for persons with disabilities or through empowering them to access education and employment (Kandyomunda et al., 2010). Accordingly, this section presents findings and analysis for the different empowerment strategies and activities by the five local NGOs to empower the visually impaired.

Research findings reveals that local NGOs in Egypt working in the area of visual impairment can be categorized into three groups: (1) Organizations for Persons with Disabilities, (2) Organizations of People with Disabilities, (3) Associations of the Parents of Children with Disabilities and the independent sector. The five interviewed NGO's in this research reflects a mix of the first three.

5.3.1 Education Empowerment

Special Education and Rehabilitation Services

All NGOs agreed that early intervention in the field of visually impaired children is so vital. One NGO commented that 95 per cent of what the visually impaired child learns is in his/her first three years. It is noted from the interviews that unfortunately some parents do not correctly evaluate the level of their children visual impairment. For example, some children may have extremely low eye vision so their parents assume or consider them completely blind. This may happen especially in rural areas or among marginalized families who do not have access to efficient medical services or in some cases funding to cover related costs. A prerequisite to successful rehabilitation and participation is gaining insight into the child's visual functioning. Some of these local NGOs support these parents by first giving them advise to do a proper eye check and increase their awareness that the first step to achieve a successful rehabilitation and participation is first to gain insight into the child's visual functioning. The level of visual functioning can greatly influence a child's early development. Some of these NGOs refer these parents to some qualified doctors to do proper diagnoses and in some cases where parents can't cover the costs of the eye testing, they can help them cover some or part of the costs. In case the child needs eye glasses, they can help

them in providing it. In general, this helps to establish a more structured rehabilitation plan for each child.

Rehabilitation services are one form of empowerment to the visually impaired. Many of the NGOs highlight that empowering the visually impaired to access education starts initially by educating the child about the surrounding environment through educating them about the necessary life skills. Four of the five NGOs do offer rehabilitation services related to independent living skills 'life skills'. These NGOs do also have rehabilitation centers.

They offer these services from very early stage and some of them offer these services starting the age of three years old. The services offered include 'orientation' which teaches the visually impaired child to perceive and understand his/her position and location within a given environment; how to use the other senses for living like the sense of touching; mobility training like how to move about safely and independently indoors and out; how to dress themselves, meal preparation and general day-to-day tasks within the home. Mobility is the ability to move about within a given environment. These abilities do not suddenly appear at a specific time or age, but have an underlying conceptual foundation which begins at birth. The objective of these services is to empower the visually impaired to live normal life where they can depend on themselves. The period where the child starts learning these life skills until the time they go to school is characterized as an adaptation phase. It is also found that some of these NGOs provide excellent support to the parents by educating them to accept their child's disability and providing them with counseling and information on how to act and the correct way to support their children. This can also take the format of special lectures, one to one consultation sessions or through arranging trips with both children and parents. Though trips may sound to some as entertaining rather than educating yet this entertaining environment helps the child to adapt to external environment and helps to educate the parents more about their children

It is clear from the above that rehabilitation services - provided by local NGOs in the form of life skills- is important as an initial step towards the child's social inclusion, integration and empowerment to access education. The parents of the child with disability depend on these local NGOs as a provider for these services. As a result, the child moves towards his first steps to social inclusion. These NGOs has an important role in educating parents about understanding their child's disability and thus empowers both parents and children.

Resource Centers and Education Empowerment

Throughout this study, I found out that many of these NGOs also act as resource centers. Even before the child goes to school, four of these NGOs have established nurseries. This plays a great role in empowering the blind and visually impaired child to access education as it prepares the child to go to school and above all supports his/her social rehabilitation as their the child starts to make and have other friends and learn social life skills.

For blind and visually impaired, Braille is an important tool that helps in the procedure of becoming literate. Braille literacy performs the same important role in a blind person's life that print literacy does in a sighted person's -it increases opportunities. Four of the local NGOs interviewed do teach Braille. When the child enters school, and at KG stage, these NGOs starts Braille literacy so they teach them the Braille. In some of these NGOs, they provide Braille literacy even for the mother of the visually impaired so that the mother is able to support her child. It has been highlighted that most of those who teach Braille are visually impaired themselves who are happy to participate in volunteering to teach to visually impaired students. This also demonstrates how these NGOs play a key role towards the visually impaired child's inclusion as Braille literacy helps the child to connect with the world by being able to read, write and communicate. Moreover, by having the teachers who are visually impaired themselves, local NGOs support their participation which goes a long with what Werner (1995) states that rehabilitation professionals should involve their disabled partners in identifying, solving and answering their needs and encourage their participation and leadership in the administration, planning, delivery of rehabilitation services.

In this study, I have identified that visually impaired children in Egypt go to the specialized schools. When the child goes to school, many of these NGOs provide the child with a shadow teacher who provides continuous follow up to the child. One of the NGOs provide training for the shadow teachers on how to work with the visually impaired through offering specialized lectures with specialists. Furthermore, this NGO had cooperation with the Egyptian Ministry of Education to train around fifty shadow teachers. Most of the interviewed NGOs provide daily afternoon extra education sessions to support the children with disability in their education. So, the child goes to school in the morning then goes to the local NGO afterwards or in weekends for extra support in the different subjects they are taught. Some of these NGOs employ visually impaired to teach and provide extra support to the children. NGOs add that this extra support empowers the

visually impaired students and boosts the sustainability of their access to the education system. Additionally, as many of the teachers are visually impaired themselves, this also promotes their participation and makes them feel beneficial.

In fact, findings reveal that all interviewed NGOs act as a resource centers. Four out of the five NGOs not only teaches Braille but they also have Braille printers. Braille printers are very expensive and can nearly be found only at these resource centers. In fact one of the NGOs does not only have its own resource centre but it also helps other specialized schools to establish their resource rooms in Cairo and Giza governorate.

Despite the fact that inclusive education is not applied in Egypt yet respondents highlighted that the higher education system in Egypt is inclusive (but limited to some Arts universities) in terms that both visually impaired and non visually impaired students get the same education and they study the same curricula as their sighted colleagues. However, one of the main issues that faces the visually impaired when they go to higher education is that all the university materials like books are not available as soft copies. Three out of the five NGOs offers support by having volunteers who types these books to change them to soft copies and then they print them in Braille. One of the NGOs commented that this is a very time consuming process, in addition to the fact that Braille printers and papers are very expensive. However, facilitating materials for visually impaired students at university empowers the students and helps them to access university materials and achieve results as their peers. One of the NGOs added that they are in process of establishing the electronic library in cooperation with Cairo University where students can get to the library online from any place.

Moreover, with new technologies, local NGOs provide training in computer skills so visually impaired children and adults can use the computer as their peers. Moreover, one of the NGOs added that they are in the process of cooperation with some Egyptian universities to help and train visually impaired students to have their tests as computer based exams. This will further support empowering hundreds of students who previously used the 'tester'.

In summary, when trying to understand the role of local NGOs in empowering the visually impaired to access education in Egypt and in light of the issues highlighted earlier by the local NGOs, research data revealed that local NGOs are doing much effort towards empowering the visually impaired. Initially local NGOs are the first place that parents go to when they find out that

their child is visually impaired as they usually do not know how to act or what to do. NGOs provide informal consultative sessions to the parents where they educate them about their child disability. Thus they first empower the parents.

It has been pointed out earlier by local NGOs how important early intervention is, accordingly, this study found that local NGOs strategies supports early intervention. Moreover, local NGOs provide rehabilitation services to the child with disability through which the child gets access to learn essential life skills. The ultimate aim of offering rehabilitation services is for the visually impaired child to accomplish the existing rehabilitation goals and thereby increasing participation. This is considered the first stop towards empowering the child with disability to access education. It also empowers the child towards social inclusion and integration. Moreover, local NGOs have nurseries which prepares the child for education, paves the way towards his access to formal education and supports his social integration where they starts to have friends. These local NGOs act as resource centers where the child can also learn Braille at an early age.

Many NGOs offers extra daily support to visually impaired children to help them with their education. Despite the fact that these NGOs have limited resources in terms of funding and they work in small premises yet they manage to deliver services and activities which are difficult for official agencies to deliver. Because many of the staff working in these local NGOs are visually impaired themselves or a parent of a visually impaired child, it is clear that 'Passion' is one of the drivers for their efforts. In fact many of them are working on voluntary bases. It is clear that local NGOs work is vital in empowering the visually impaired child.

However, it is noticed that the number of local NGOs in working in education and employment is extremely limited. I find that there is a dire need to have more local NGOs working in this field. There are other NGOs but their work is charity based. However, findings reveal that there is no networking among these NGOs. Their efforts are fragmented and disjointed. Networking among these NGOs can help them learn and benefit from each other experiences or even have some collaborative initiatives.

Despite the fact that it has been noted earlier by some NGOs that in many cases the quality of the education and the quality of teachers at special schools is not strong, however, research findings reveal that one of the shortcomings of local NGOs is that none of the interviewed NGOs provide training for teachers. Most of the teachers get their knowledge through the practice and real life experience.

Research reveals that these local NGOs do not provide any awareness raising activities within their local communities about disability issues. In fact, these awareness raising would help a great deal in decreasing the societal stigma especially among school children.

Research also revealed that all interviewed NGOs do not have any role in policy making nor they were they engaged in any policy making activity. All the NGOs were working separately and do not have any collaborative role with either the government nor with other NGOs.

5.3.2 Employment empowerment

As previously discussed in some literature, some of the visually impaired face obstacles that stop them from accessing employment opportunities or entering into the job market. Respondents added that the barriers may vary from employers' incomplete knowledge and attitudes toward visually impaired employees. Yet there other factors like lack of skills that empowers the visually impaired to join the work force or it may be environmental obstacles which make physical access to employment hard or sometimes there is lack of social awareness leading to feelings of exclusion in the work place.

The visually impaired like any other job seekers needs the necessary skills to empower them to enter the job market. Language skills are also an important skill that employers look for in the job applicant. In fact, four out of the five NGOs provide English language courses taught at their own premises. One of the NGOs has even a specialized English lab that has most updated methods as well as technologies for teaching visually impaired. This NGO sought financial support and partnered with one of the companies who funded the project and was also supported by AMIDEAST and they have managed in two years to teach English to around 160 visually impaired people.

As part of their vision and strategy, three of the studied NGOs seek to empower Egyptians with disabilities by providing them with training and development opportunities that can help them get access to a decent job that suits each person's particular competences and empowers them to become an integral part in society. These trainings include soft skills training that empowers the visually impaired to access the job market. These trainings like: how to write a CV, interviewing skills, communication skills presentation skills, time management skills, sales and telesales skills. Some of these local NGOs do provide support to employ the visually impaired through partnering

with some companies and helping the visually impaired to be employed.

In fact, one of the studied NGOs is partnering with a company that offers a “Stream the Dream” course which is an employability program that offers a chain of essential work skills courses. These courses are easily accessible and customized to train people with disability thus providing disabled graduates with the necessary interpersonal skills aiming to meet labour market needs. After the disabled graduate finish the chain of courses, they take an exam and eventually are issued a certificate. This NGO commented that the attendees (who were persons with disability) have a high level of commitment because they want to set a role model for their peers. In fact, it is evident that some of the local NGOs that provide developmental trainings do also partner with local companies as an initiative to support NGOs in covering the incurred costs. For example, one of the interviewed NGOs partnered with a well known telecom company that successfully trained around 300 visually impaired to join the work force and of which 289 managed to be successfully employed.

Research findings also reveal that four out of the five local NGOs provide continuous vocational training and workshops where experts teach a range of different practices, starting from arts-work and jewellery-making to various professions. Those workshops help visually impaired graduates to find suitable jobs or even establish their own business and become entrepreneurs. It was highlighted that many of the experts teaching those workshops are donating their time and in many cases the workshop materials are provided by the local NGO. The products that come out of the workshops are sold locally and in many cases at fairs that the local NGOs support in setting up.

However, some respondents commented that unfortunately, in many cases people wrongly perceive that the only job that is suitable for the visually impaired is only in call centers or jobs that involve the telephone. However, it is highlighted that this is a wrong perception since the visually impaired can successfully perform a variety of other tasks and they should be given the choice to work in other specializations.

It is clear from the respondents' answers that vocational, soft skills and developmental trainings is their major strategy to empower the visually impaired to access the job market and find a decent job. Despite the fact that this is true and has been important and empowering yet, one of the local NGOs pointed out that there is also a dire need to work on raising the awareness about disability

among employers as well as the corporate sector in Egypt. This NGO stressed that it is not enough to empower the visually impaired by facilitating training and helping them in finding jobs, NGOs need also to raise companies' and corporates' awareness towards disability issues and eradicate negative societal attitudes or perceptions in order to achieve sustainability . It has been noted that one of the reasons to why some visually impaired or persons with disability do not maintain their job for a long time is due to lack of awareness from the company management or colleagues towards disability.

In addition, some NGOs aim not only to empower the people with disability (including visually impaired) through training and development programs but also to develop better awareness of disability within the Egyptian community. Only one of the interviewed local NGOs achieve this through helping companies to promote a culture that is responsive to disability and encourage companies to have recruitment efforts that is inclusive to the disabled. To achieve this, this NGO has created a new concept called 'Inclusive Community Days'. It was highlighted that in general, many companies run away days or community days for their own staff so this NGO has created this initiative Inclusive Community Days where the company employees, the NGO team and the people with disability (including the visually impaired) all get together and attend a full day of activities including arts activities. Moderators are persons with disability volunteers. The aim of the Inclusive Community Days is to help the company to know more about the people with disability and their abilities where all teams engage in the same activities as well as know more about the NGO and its programs. Having the people with disability as moderators has hugely empowered them.

In addition, this NGO stressed the importance of trying to look for creative and innovative ideas as one of the drivers for their activities. For example, another activity they deliver is running Disability Etiquette Sessions. Raising awareness activities about people with disability like the disability etiquette sessions is an important factor in empowering the visually impaired or people with disability in general. In many cases, some people with disability may succeed in getting a job yet due to some unawareness from peers on how to deal with the person with disability, some of them leave the jobs. For example, this NGO through one of its initiatives was able to employ 300 persons with disability yet only one was able to stay in his job for a period of nine month. This is due to the fact that, for example, in many cases, peers go to their usual lunch breaks leaving their visually impaired colleague on his/her own so he/she feels excluded or marginalized. Thus the aim of the Disability Etiquette sessions is supporting both the disabled and

their peers to be educated more about each other.

According to this NGO, these community days as well as the disability etiquette sessions helped in raising awareness towards the potentials of the people with disabilities. After they have delivered a number of these sessions, they found that, many companies have offered job opportunities to the people with disabilities.

Moreover, this NGO also came up with the idea of Business Development Meeting which aims to educate the company first about the NGO activities as well as raise the company awareness on disability. In some cases, companies do not know or lack awareness of the necessary needs in terms of accessibility or software to efficiently employ persons with disability. This NGO offer consultancy services to the companies like assessing their software needs, accessibility needs. They do assessments, provide feedback to the companies and provide follow up.

In summary, research findings reveals that most NGO strategies in terms of empowering the visually impaired to access the job market is through providing language, soft skills and developmental training. Interviewed NGOs have been successfully delivering these activities for long time. Some even go further and help visually impaired to find decent jobs through partnering with some companies. This has in fact helped hundreds of the visually impaired to access employment. However, this is one side of the coin, as previously mentioned in literature, societal attitudes is one of the main obstacles behind hindering the disabled to access the job market so there is a dire need to raise employees and company's awareness about disability in the work place. Research reveals that, there should be more efforts by the local NGOs to raise awareness of employers and employees towards the disability. Additionally, there needs to be more role for local NGOs in providing consultation to companies to better equip themselves with necessary accessibility and software needs. If this is done, this will educate many companies about the 'know how' which can support employers towards employing person with disability and creating an equal opportunity environment.

Local NGOs do not have any role in policy making nor do they have any communication with the newly established National Council for Disability Affairs (NCDA). Research reveals that local NGOs feedback is that the NCDA role is only consultative and not executive. Accordingly, it has an ineffective role in empowering the people with disability.

Research findings revealed that the Egyptian disability policy is still captured within a traditional individual medical model of disability. However, the study shows that many of the efforts of the interviewed local NGOs aim to move towards the social model. Accordingly, I can describe that local NGOs efforts and support is a mix between the traditional individual medical model of disability and the social model and is trying to shift towards the social model. Despite the fact that some local NGOs still provide charitable services and support in the medical treatment of the people with disabilities yet many local NGOs are already providing support and services that is directed towards empowering the visually impaired in the direction of their social inclusion and participation in the society and empowering them to have an equal opportunity to access education and employability.

Although, some of the local NGOs efforts is directed towards empowerment yet very limited NGOs are working on breaking the attitudinal and environmental obstacles. Local NGOs need to exert more efforts on working to raise the awareness of the community towards people with disability to eradicate negative societal attitudes. It is also very important for local NGOs to get involved in policy making process and advocate for the rights of the visually impaired. Despite the fact that the local NGO stated that they are not consultant nor included by the government when they formulate policies, yet NGOs need to be more proactive by formulating strong networks or pushing groups to advocate for better policies and laws.

5.4 Challenges Facing the Local NGOs

Local NGOs interviewed as part of this study were asked to identify the main challenges facing them. All respondents shared a similar sense of dissatisfaction while describing the current challenges. Below I have summarized the main challenges

1-Policy challenges:

All respondents shared the same frustration that many policies are just on papers but not applied and that there is there is a wide gap between announced policies and the actual situation on the ground like policies related to inclusive education and employment. Despite the fact the government policy for employing persons with disabilities is based on a quota system (five per cent) for companies with more than 50 employees however, respondents added that the employment quota is not enforced. Frustration is evident in the fact that even penalties are so weak so employers prefer to pay the EGP 100 penalty rather than abide by the law.

Respondents also commented that there are other laws and policies that should be discussed and looked at, which is currently missing like life and medical insurances. For example, one respondent pointed out that the visually impaired people do not have the right to have life insurances as any other person. Moreover, when visually impaired go to open a bank account, they are requested to bring another sighted person to guarantee him/her. It has also been pointed out that different medical insurance coverage's apply to the different disabilities.

Respondents also added that there are no laws or policies to enforce employers or education institutions like universities to make reasonable adjustments to their services, unlike some other countries who have policies that enforces universities or institutions to make reasonable adjustments to their services, to supply the equipment or tools necessary for them to overcome difficulties that they might face. These tools may include elevators to facilitate easier on-campus movement, specially designed classrooms, books written in Braille for visually impaired students, and teaching assistants for deaf students so disabled students are not placed at a substantial disadvantage

In addition to all the above, local NGOs find it challenging to be excluded from taking part in policy formulation process. For NGOs, it is very frustrating that they do not have any role in policy making nor were they engaged in any previous policy making. They feel that the government do not include them or invite them when they are formulating policies. This is challenging for them because it has an impact upon their efforts and activities.

2-Networking challenges:

Some respondents added that there is no networking among the local NGOs in Egypt. In fact, everyone is working separately on their own and some NGOs are not willing to network. This is considered a challenge as networking among local NGOs can help them to benefit from each other's experience and collaborate in some joint activities or reach out to as many regions as possible to cover rural and marginalized areas. Most importantly, local NGOs can form strong groups to push governments and advocate for more rights for the disabled persons.

3-Volunteers challenges:

One of the respondents highlighted that they face difficulty in finding young volunteers who can then lead the NGO in future referred to as 'second line leaders'. In fact, some of those working in the management of this NGO are now approaching retirement age which makes them worried

about sustaining leadership at this NGO. Respondent added that there is lack of interest from some young people to volunteer or even if they do, they do it for some time and then leave. This fact may exist in some NGOs, but we can't generalize this issue as there are some other NGOs that do not face this challenge, instead some other local NGO have strong resources of volunteers, many of which are persons with disability themselves.

4-Inaccurate data challenges:

Most respondents shared the fact that one of the challenges they face is the lack of data accuracy data on disabilities and no data about the NGOs working in the field of disabilities. Moreover, even if there is limited data on NGOs, there are no accurate evidences showing which NGO is still running or which is not. This eventually leads to considerable difficulties in making policy and settings priorities for their activities. Moreover, having accurate data can help NGOs to formulate collaborative efforts with each other or with the government.

5-Awareness challenges:

Some local NGOs commented that they find it challenging to reach out to people. They are using word of mouth and social media yet they still need to reach more people and raise their awareness regarding what they are doing or about disability. Most respondents shared same frustration from media either because they are doing very limited effort to raise people's awareness regarding disability issues or if some of them do, it is not usually the proper or correct image. Most of the media coverage's are related to charity work but not on real empowerment.

5-Creative and innovative approaches:

One of the NGOs also added that it is always challenging for them to come up with new creative and innovative ideas to reach out and engage the disabled. They find it challenging to find new forms of reaching out to people.

6-Human Resources and experts challenges:

Interviewed NGOs indicated that it is always challenging for them to find the dedicated experienced and talented experts in the field. Many NGOs depend on their own experts whether being teachers or trainers (English or soft skills). It is always challenging for them to find these experts and retain them. For NGOs, the support and efforts that these teachers and experts provide is priceless.

7-Limited financial resources challenges:

Although limited financial resources has been highlighted as an issue yet it was not the main issue. Many interviewed NGOs stated that most of their staff and experts are working on voluntary basis yet in some cases there are services and equipment that are very expensive. For example, Braille printers and Braille printing papers are very expensive. Some NGOs do offer medical examinations to needy children which incurs costs. Although NGOs try to do their best in securing funds yet it is sometimes very challenging to always sustain these funds.

Chapter Six

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusion

Many of the visually impaired in Egypt do suffer from barriers to access education as well as employment. Researchers believed that the Egyptian governments all over the years dealt with the problem but with successive shortcomings and negligence that made the lives of the visually impaired even become harder (Ahmed, 2012).

Research studies acknowledged that NGOs have performed a big role in the development of services for the people with disabilities globally. In many cases, this role has been played especially in the lack of government contribution (Kandyomunda et al., 2010). NGOs have been working in Egypt for the past decade with people with disabilities including visually impaired. Thus the purpose of this study is to evaluate the role they played and examine the effectiveness of their efforts in Egypt in empowering the visually impaired to access education and employment and if they have a role in policy making. Disability has a multiple dimensional models as it is the result of complex interactions between the functional limitations evolving from a person's physical, intellectual or mental condition and the social and physical environment (CBM, 2007). To achieve the purpose, the disability models concepts and characteristics have been used throughout the study to support in analyzing the efforts of local NGOs.

The study has achieved its objectives as it reveals that in Egypt, local NGOs are delivering a number of initiatives towards empowering the visually impaired through strategies that support very early intervention, starting by providing informal consultative sessions to the parents where they educate them about their child disability, providing rehabilitation services to the child with disability through which the child gets access to learn essential life skills which is considered the first stop towards empowering the child with disability to access education. Besides, local NGOs have nurseries that prepare the child for education and pave the way towards access to formal education and support social integration. Many local NGOs are offering extra daily support to visually impaired children to support them with their education and thus do not struggle through their education process or leave their education. However, the study reveals that exclusion rather than inclusion still exists in school education due to the lack of 'know how' as Egyptian colleges of education do not have special programs for teacher preparation with regard to students with

disabilities. This is also due to the fact that still there are negative societal attitudes towards the children with disability as some parents of non-visually impaired children do not support the idea of inclusive education.

On the other hand, most NGO strategies in terms of empowering the visually impaired to access the job market are through providing language, soft skills and developmental training. Some even help visually impaired to find decent jobs through partnering with some companies.

Despite these support and services in empowering the visually impaired to access both education as well as employment yet the study reveals that the number of local NGOs in working in education and employment is extremely limited so there is a dire need to have more local NGOs working in this field. Moreover, local NGOs do not provide any awareness raising activities within their local communities about disability issues. In fact, these awareness raining would help a great deal in decreasing the societal stigma especially among school children. There is a dire need to raise employees and company's awareness about disability in the work place and there needs to be a bigger role for local NGOs in providing consultation to companies to better equip themselves with necessary accessibility and software needs.

The study showed that local NGOs do not play an adequate role in policy making nor were they engaged in policy making activity. Local NGOs are working separately and do not have any collaborative role with either the government nor with other NGOs. Local NGOs can start to create a strong network which they can use to share best practices and experiences and also advocate for the rights of the disabled people and policies.

6.2 Recommendations

The findings of this research reveal a number of recommendations for both the government and local NGOs to consider improving the empowerment of the visually impaired to access education and employment which are summarized in this section.

As highlighted earlier by one of the NGO founders that there is no specialized faculty in Egypt to prepare or qualify teachers to teach visually impaired and since this is very important so my first recommendations is that, it is high time that universities should start having specialized faculties or departments to qualify and prepare teachers in using a set of professional standards and

scientific manners in teaching students with visual impairment. This will improve the quality of education and will also help in educating future teachers and equip them with the needed 'know how' which we are still missing in Egyptian schools.

Since stigmatization is still considered one of the major causes of exclusion in Egypt, it is recommended to increase awareness and understanding of disability at both organizational, community and institutional levels to promote positive attitudes towards disability. Study showed that only one local NGO is working on raising the awareness towards disability issues. Local NGOs need to start organizing awareness raising campaigns to teach and educate people about eye problems and also to educate the people of on how to deal with the visually impaired. To fund these campaigns, NGOs can partner with companies or hospitals or media.

Research findings revealed that there is no networking amongst the local NGOs. It is recommended that local NGOs start to create a strong network which they can use to share best practices, and experiences. These networks will additionally increase NGOs capacity to reach out for people with disability in rural as well as marginalized areas. They can also help local NGOs to advocate for the rights of the disabled people and policies that are inclusive.

The development of better figures and data on persons with disabilities is useful for both formulating good policy as well as in evaluating progress towards the achievement of objectives and targets (DfID, 2000). Lack of data about disability and numbers of disabled in Egypt is an important issue that needs to be addressed since it can be effective in terms of making policies and settings priorities for both the Egyptian government and local NGOs activities. It is recommended that both the government and local NGOs should be collaborating together to create a credible database upon which policies and activities can be based upon.

Inadequate involvement and consultation is one of the most common reasons why policies fail. Continuous productive policy dialogue is recommended between governments, local NGOs, and persons with disability with a view to ensuring that appropriate legal and policy frameworks for the inclusion of persons with disabilities in employment, social service provision and education and political participation are not only developed but also sustained. Accordingly, persons with disabilities, through their NGOs, should be actively and continuously engaged in the formulation and implementation of legislation and policies that will affect their lives. Other stakeholders

should also be involved; in the case of employment, employers' organizations and trade unions should be consulted to ensure meaningful implementation planning.

There is an urgent need not only for comprehensive legislations to ensure the rights of disabled persons in all aspects- civil, economic, social, political and cultural rights but also to ensure enforcement of laws and policies. For example, universities and colleges should under a legal obligation, make reasonable adjustments to their services and provide facilities and resources to accommodate students with disabilities. Many items in disability laws were written down in a very general terms. It is recommended that local NGOs participates in the consultation phase of formulating laws so that a clear and precise explanations of these laws and regulations are proposed specifying practical mechanisms for the enforcement of those laws.

Finally, it is strongly recommended that there should be a continuous cooperation between local governments and local NGOs through ongoing engagement in discussions and dialogue with government at the all levels. According to Ilieva (2006), structured dialogues and discussions with local NGOs boost the government knowledge about current situations. Moreover, citizens should become engaged in decision-making and be socially included. This can also benefit the government through making use of the local NGOs expertise that can enhance the performance of government in the areas where they lack expertise (Ilieva, 2006).

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

A-General questions for the local NGOs

- 1- How do you assess the current situation of the visually impaired people in Egypt?
- 2- What are the challenges that face the disabled and visually impaired in Egypt in terms of:
 - access to education
 - access to employment opportunities
- 3- What is the role of local NGOs in empowering the visually impaired people in Egypt?
- 4- Have NGOs played a positive role in empowering visually impaired people in Egypt?

B- Questions about the local NGO's activities and roles

- 5-What is the nature of this local NGO?
- 6-What are the activities (programs) of this local NGO?
- 7-What is the role of this NGO in empowering the visually impaired people?
- 8-Does this NGO have a strategy/plan? If yes, what is it?
- 9-What are the challenges that face this local NGO?

C- Questions about the local NGO's role in policy making

- 10-Does your NGO have a role in advocating for rights of the people with disability in Egypt? If yes, what is it? And what are your advocacy priorities?
- 11-Do you work with the local government on disability issues? If yes,how?

D- Questions for the member of the National Council for Disability Affairs

- 12-What is the current Disability Policy in Egypt?
- 13-How do you assess the role of local NGOs in empowering people with disability in Egypt?
- 14-Does local NGOs play a role in disability policy making in Egypt?

Appendix B: Approval of Institutional Review Board

CASE #2015-2016-025



To: Nevine Sharaf
Cc: Mariez Wasfi
From: Atta Gebril, Chair of the IRB
Date: Oct 15, 2015
Re: Approval of study

This is to inform you that I reviewed your revised research proposal entitled "Evaluating the role that NGOs play in empowering visually impaired to access education and employment in Egypt" and determined that it required consultation with the IRB under the "expedited" heading. As you are aware, the members of the IRB suggested certain revisions to the original proposal, but your new version addresses these concerns successfully. The revised proposal used appropriate procedures to minimize risks to human subjects and that adequate provision was made for confidentiality and data anonymity of participants in any published record. I believe you will also make adequate provision for obtaining informed consent of the participants.

This approval letter was issued under the assumption that you have not started data collection for your research project. Any data collected before receiving this letter could not be used since this is a violation of the IRB policy.

Please note that IRB approval does not automatically ensure approval by CAPMAS, an Egyptian government agency responsible for approving some types of off-campus research. CAPMAS issues are handled at AUC by the office of the University Counsellor, Dr. Amr Salama. The IRB is not in a position to offer any opinion on CAPMAS issues, and takes no responsibility for obtaining CAPMAS approval.

This approval is valid for only one year. In case you have not finished data collection within a year, you need to apply for an extension.

Thank you and good luck.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Atta Gebril'.

Dr. Atta Gebril
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